Bengaluru Monday, February 23, 2026 Pages 14 Vol 79 No 54 ₹7

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DH

DECCAN HERALD

The Power of Good

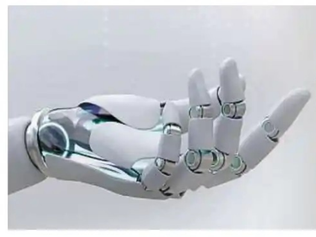
SA give India a reality check

All-round Proteas hand hosts a 76-run drubbing

Page 14

World

Man trying to enter Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort shot dead P.12



Business

Big tech giants in attendance: India sets course for AI P.10

Nation

ED aims at filing 500 charge sheets P.9

Nation

'Cage of shame' in Gujarat villages P.8

Tariff tension: India 'delays' US trade talks

Move comes after American Supreme Court struck down Trump tariffs

NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON, REUTERS

India has delayed plans to send a trade delegation to Washington this week, chiefly because of uncertainty after the US Supreme Court struck down tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump, a source in its commerce ministry said on Sunday.

One of the first concrete reactions among Asian nations to the decision, it follows Trump's move on Saturday to levy a temporary tariff of 15%, the maximum allowed by law, on US imports from all countries, following the court's rejection.

"The decision to defer the visit was taken after discussions between officials of the two countries," said the source, who sought anonymity as the matter is a sensitive one. "No new date for the visit has been decided."

The delay came mainly from the uncertainty over tariffs following Friday's judgment, the source added.

FRAMEWORK FACES QUESTIONS

1. India and US, earlier this month, agreed on a framework to finalise an interim trade deal
2. To implement the first phase of the trade agreement, the framework has to be converted into a legal document
3. As per interim deal, Washington will cut down the tariffs to 18%
4. So far, punitive 25% has been removed
5. Remaining 25% exists
6. Following the court ruling, Trump has announced hiking tariffs to 15%
7. This levy, if notified, will be over and above the existing most-favoured nation or import duties in US
8. For instance, if a product faces a 5% MFN duty, an additional 15% will be imposed, taking the effective duty to 20%. Earlier, this was 5% plus 25%.
9. There is no clarity about what the US tariff will be on countries such as India after the 150-day period

The delegation had been set to leave on Sunday for talks to finalise an interim trade deal, after both countries agreed on a framework for Washington to cut punitive tariffs of 25% on some Indian exports linked to New Delhi's Russian oil purchases.

Meanwhile, US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer on Sunday said none of the countries that had reached trade deals with the US had indicated plans to withdraw following the Supreme Court decision.

Greer told *CBS News*' 'Face the Nation' programme that he had already spoken with his counterpart from the European Union and would be speaking with officials from other countries.

"I haven't heard anyone yet come to me and say the deal is off," Greer said in the first of several media interviews about the Supreme Court ruling. "They want to see how this plays out."

US tariffs on Indian goods were set to be cut to 18%, while India agreed to buy US items worth $500 billion over five years, ranging from energy supplies to aircraft and parts, precious metals and technology products.

▸ US trade, Page 4

Help to friend turns into Rs 7-cr nightmare

Shared bank account info was used to launder money

PRAJWAL D'SOUZA
BENGALURU, DHNS

A 19-year-old engineering student was shocked to learn that his friend had misused his bank account, which cybercriminals later used to launder Rs 7 crore in just two days.

Sangam R (name changed), a student at a reputable college in northern Bengaluru, had lent his bank account to his friend E Ayush, sharing his passbook, ATM card, netbanking credentials and even the SIM used to receive transaction alerts.

In November, Ayush told Sangam his bank account was blocked due to insufficient balance and asked to use his account for a few days.

Sangam had known Ayush for a year, and the two had become close. Sangam agreed and mailed over his Karnataka Grameena Bank passbook, ATM card, netbanking credentials and an Airtel SIM card linked to the account.

Later, bank representatives showed up at Sangam's address to inform that his account was being blocked due to transactions totalling Rs 7 crore in two days, which were proceeds from cybercrimes.

"The transactions occurred in just two days, so bank officials tracked him down for verification. They had been tracking a company, likely a shell corporation, that was used to launder the proceeds, and wanted to confirm since bank officials are also being investigated in cybercrimes now," a senior cybercrime investigator told *DH*.

> We suspect that Ayush sold/lent the victim's bank account on Telegram to cybercriminals located abroad, who later recruited the arrested suspect to operate the account using a work-from-home ruse
>
> **A cybercrime investigator**

▸ Cybercrime, Page 4

'Top gun' Devji surrenders amid govt's final push against Maoists

S N V SUDHIR
HYDERABAD, DHNS

In a defining moment in India's battle against decades-long Maoist insurgency, CPI (Maoist) top commander Tippiri Tirupati alias Devji has surrendered to Telangana police.

Sources in the Telangana Special Intelligence Wing confirmed to *DH* that Devji (62), also known as Devu Ji, surrendered alongside senior Maoist leader Malla Raji Reddy alias Sangram, Narasimha Reddy alias Ganganna and 16 other cadres.

They emerged from the Asifabad forest two days ago and their surrender will be announced publicly in a day or two.

The surrender of Devji, considered a "top gun" among the Maoists and the first Dalit to hold the proscribed organisation's general secretary post, is viewed as the Naxal movement's effective end.

The Centre has set a deadline of March 31 to eradicate the movement.

Devji's surrender coincides with central security forces encircling the Kareguttalu Hills along the Telangana-Chhattisgarh border amid suspicions that he and others were hiding there.

Related report, Page 9

AI summit protest: Modi blasts Cong's 'naked and dirty' politics

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Setting the stage for the post-recess Budget session of Parliament in March that will take up Opposition-sponsored no-trust vote against Speaker Om Birla, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday sought to isolate the Congress within the Opposition ranks.

He accused the party of resorting to "shirtless protest" to pursue "nangi and gandi" (naked and dirty) politics while India was hosting an international event.

"I ask Congress leaders, that the nation already knows your true form, what was the need to strip further?" Modi said.

PM Narendra Modi in Meerut on Sunday. PTI

"The crazy and reckless Congress leaders are bent on destroying the country," Modi said in an indirect attack on leader Rahul Gandhi.

▸ Modi, Page 4

Rajaji to replace Lutyens in Rashtrapati Bhavan, Page 5

CPCB confirms presence of lead in vegetables in B'luru

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

Over two years after *DH* reported on heavy metal contamination in vegetables arriving in Bengaluru based on a study, new tests by a committee comprising Central and state authorities have confirmed the presence of lead, a highly toxic metal, and pesticides.

DH had on October 25, 2023, reported on the study by the Environment Management and Policy Research Institute (EMPRI) about heavy metal concentration in many of the 400 samples the researchers collected.

The National Green Tribunal had later taken up a suo motu case and ordered the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to "ascertain the ground situation and also duly examine the report of the EMPRI".

▸ Contamination, Page 4

India to be part of 'hexagon of alliances': Netanyahu

JERUSALEM, PTI: Describing India as a "global power" and its Prime Minister Narendra Modi a "personal" friend, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday talked about his vision of a "hexagon" of alliances in and around the region that will include India.

Modi will be visiting Israel from February 25 to 26, his second since the "historic" visit of 2017, which was the first by any Indian PM.

Details on Page 12

Quickly

Three terrorists killed in J&K's Kishtwar

A top commander of Jaish-e-Mohammad was among three terrorists killed in an encounter with security forces in the Chatroo area of Kishtwar district on Sunday, marking a significant blow to militant networks operating south of the Pir Panjal range. Officials said preliminary assessments suggest that one of the slain was Saifullah, a senior JeM commander.

Details on Page 8

Eight with suspected terror links arrested

Eight men with suspected links to terror outfits, including seven hailing from Bangladesh, have been arrested from West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, with Delhi Police on Sunday claiming that they were behind pasting anti-India posters near metro stations eulogising terrorists.

Details on Page 8

Woman killed in elephant attack

A woman labourer from Haveri district was killed in a wild elephant attack at Hyarambipura village near Hunasehalli in Chikkamagaluru taluk on Sunday morning. Enraged by the incident, locals staged a protest, bringing traffic on Chikkamagaluru-Sringeri State Highway to a standstill.

Details on Page 4

India condemns Pak's Afghan strikes

India has condemned Pakistan's fresh airstrikes on Afghan territory that resulted in civilian casualties. New Delhi described the strikes as another attempt by Pakistan to "externalise its internal failures", and reiterated its support for Afghanistan.

Advertorial

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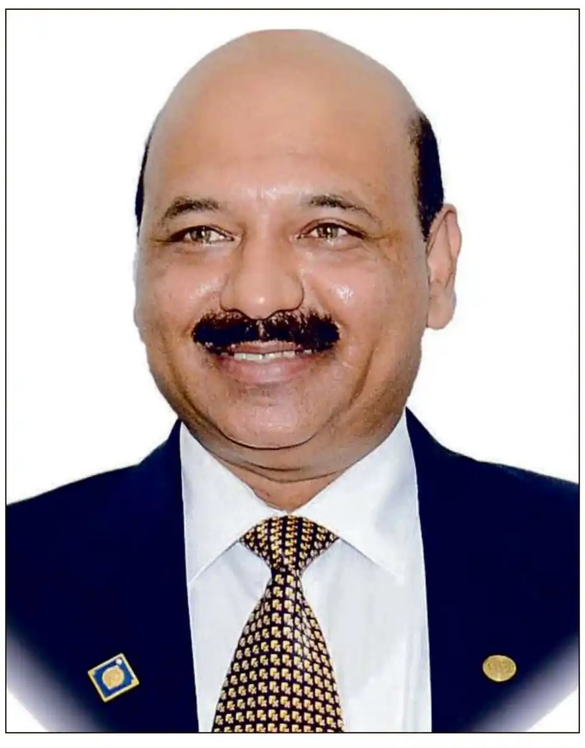

On the occasion of our Founder's Birthday, we pay our respectful homage to late Sri. B. Vedhagiri, whose vision and foresight laid the foundation of our esteemed institution. Established 25 years ago, the college stands today as a proud testament to your unwavering commitment to education, values, and societal progress. What began as a noble dream has flourished into a center of academic excellence, nurturing generations of students and shaping responsible citizens.

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Reshme Bhavan project in Okalipuram threatens 575 trees

Sparks concern over city's dwindling greenery

NAVEEN MENEZES
BENGALURU, DHNS

A large green patch opposite a popular shopping mall in Okalipuram may soon be lost, as the Department of Sericulture plans to cut down 575 trees to build a 'Reshme Bhavan' on a 4.2-acre site.

The proposal, currently under review by the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), involves the removal of 575 trees from the premises of the Office of the Joint Director, located on survey numbers 12, 14, and 17 in Muddenahalli, Okalipuram.

A total of 628 trees are located on the land, but only 53 are slated to be spared.

The Public Works Department has been authorised to carry out the construction.

This green space is the last remaining open area in Okalipuram, which is situated a short distance from the Majestic bus and railway terminals. The surrounding area is heavily built-up, with slums and a large drain nearby.

In October 2024, the state cabinet approved a Rs 528-crore proposal for the construction of office space at the site. Following this approval, the PWD approached the GBA for the necessary clearance.

While the GBA has granted permission to clear the land, the Karnataka High Court has set out specific guidelines for the tree felling.

Under Section 8(3) of the Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act, no tree in Bengaluru can be felled without the approval of the Tree Officer, who is the Deputy Conservator of Forests at the GBA.

A Google Earth view of the green patch in Okalipuram, where the 'Reshme Bhavan' has been planned.

As part of the approval process, a tree committee will visit the site to assess how many trees can be felled. The GBA has also invited suggestions and objections from citizens, allowing a 10-day period for feedback.

The Department of Sericulture has described the project as a prestigious government initiative and has requested early approval, along with a no-objection certificate. They also noted that the Silk Department's office has already been relocated to the Mysore Sugar Company building on JC Road.

Among the trees proposed for removal are silver oak, neem, tabebuia, mahogany, jackfruit, gulmohar, rain tree, and Ashoka trees.

Environmental activist Sandeep Anirudhan expressed concern over the city's shrinking green cover, which has fallen from 70% to just 2% in recent decades.

"There should be zero tolerance towards tree cutting anywhere in the city. Globally, the accepted benchmark is 30% green cover. That should be our goal. We cannot afford to lose even a single tree. The focus must be on restoring greenery," he said.

Anirudhan also questioned the need for the Reshme Bhavan project in Bengaluru. "Why should Reshme Bhavana be in Bengaluru? It can be set up outside the city and help distribute development more evenly across the state," he added.

SANDEEP ANIRUDHAN,
Environmental activist

"Why should Reshme Bhavana be in Bengaluru? It can be set up outside the city and help distribute development more evenly across the state.

BDA revises penalty for vacant sites

Nadaprabhu Kempegowda and Arkavathi layouts are exempt

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) has revised its penalty structure for vacant sites where owners have failed to begin construction within the stipulated timeframe.

The new system introduces a graded penalty ranging from 2.5% to 10%, depending on the size of the plot.

According to a circular issued on February 11, the revised penalty will apply to allottees who have not commenced construction within the timeline specified in their lease-cum-sale agreement.

This decision was made during the authority's meeting on December 30.

Allottees who choose not to pay the penalty may surrender their site to the BDA. In such cases, 12.5% of the amount paid will be deducted, with the remaining balance refunded.

The revised penalty structure does not apply to the Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout or Arkavathi Layout.

Vacant site penalty

The revised 'vacant site penalty' will be calculated as a percentage of the prevailing guidance value, based on plot size:

These new rates will be applied retroactively from September 23, 2024.

- 2.5% for sites up to 600 sqft
- 5% for sites ranging from 601 to 1,200 sqft
- 7.5% for sites ranging from 1,201 to 2,400 sqft
- 10% for sites larger than 2,401 sqft

BMRCL inks Rs 80-crore naming rights deal for Bellandur metro station

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited has signed an agreement with Prestige Beta Projects Pvt Ltd of the Prestige Group, granting naming rights for the Bellandur metro station on the Outer Ring Road (ORR) Phase-2A corridor.

Under the 30-year agreement, the station will be renamed 'Prestige Bellandur Metro Station' from the date of commercial operations. The deal is valued at Rs 80 crore, with an additional Rs 10 crore payable if Prestige builds an exclusive pedestrian skywalk connecting the station to its property, taking the total potential value to Rs 90 crore.

As part of the arrangement, Prestige will undertake approved enhancement works within the station and coordinate its upkeep in line with BMRCL's safety and design norms. The agreement includes limited interior advertising rights of up to 1,000 sqft and 3,000 sqft of commercial space.

The partnership strengthens non-fare revenue streams while retaining full public ownership and operational control of the station, the BMRCL said in a statement.

19-year-old killed in accident while delivering food to father in hospital

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 19-year-old man died in a tragic accident involving his two-wheeler and a goods truck in Kengeri on Saturday night, according to officials.

The victim, Muniyappa, was employed at a two-wheeler showroom in Kengeri.

Police reported that the accident occurred near Dhananayakanahalli while Muniyappa was en route to deliver food to his father, who had been admitted to a local hospital due to an illness.

An investigation revealed that the truck driver was speeding in the wrong lane when the vehicle collided with Muniyappa's two-wheeler. The teenager suffered severe injuries and was rushed to hospital, where he later succumbed to his injuries.

A case has been filed, and authorities are searching for the truck driver, who fled the spot, abandoning the vehicle after the crash.

Namratha N, a Class 5 student of Vikas Central School, Kurubarahalli, secured the top position at the National Level Abacus Competition held in Chennai on January 24. She competed against nearly 8,000 students from various states across the country. The school congratulated Namratha on her outstanding achievement and expressed its gratitude to Karthik M, CEO of Mohan's Quick Abacus, and its Secretary, Rajkumar, for their valuable guidance and support.

Salon-style clinics lure consumers with risky skin & hair treatments

AMULLYA SHIVASHANKAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

Clinics styled as salons offering solutions for skin and hair problems are mushrooming across the city.

With assurances of resolving issues in a single session or overnight, such salons are attracting more consumers than dermatologists.

Recently, a woman filed an FIR against a beauty clinic after she underwent a treatment promoted on the clinic's Instagram account.

To verify claims, *DH* contacted several premium salon clinics across the city about who performed treatments such as Oxygen facial, chemical peels, and other procedures for acne and pigmentation.

Seven out of 10 clinics had technicians conducting the procedures, while one clinic said a doctor would prescribe the treatment, but technicians would perform it.

Dermatologists across the city report frequent cases of chemical burns from chemical peels on compromised and sensitive skin, post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, folliculitis and scalp infection from occlusive hair treatments, contact dermatitis, and nail cuticle damage, among others.

Speaking to *DH*, Dr Ravikiran Mahalank, Consultant, Dermatologist, said, "Procedures like lasers, chemical peels and microneedling are not just beauty rituals, they are controlled injuries designed to trigger healing. A medical evaluation is critical as there are underlying conditions for the issues noticed on the surface."

Contraindications, depth and precision are to be checked and screened for before undertaking such procedures, said Dr Ravikiran.

About the reasons for people choosing treatment from such unsafe salons, Dr Priyanka Kuri, Consultant Dermatology, said, "In dermatology, there are no guarantees because the skin behaves in different ways for different people. Statements such as "permanent fairness", "one-time fix", or "zero downtime for everyone" are false. These salons also encourage people to undergo treatments that their skin is not ready for."

Cosmetologists Vs Dermatologists

The salons are also branded as aesthetic clinics. While some of them are by genuine dermatologists the others are run by cosmetologists.

Speaking about the differences and concerns, Dr Shireen Furtado, Senior Consultant, Medical and Cosmetic Dermatology said, "Cosmetology is just a branch of dermatology, which can be even done as an online course for a few months, and it is not close to the actual dermatology training."

"There are currently no clear guidelines distinguishing salons from dermatology clinics that offer aesthetic procedures like lasers and fillers. However, all of these treatments should be performed by a dermatologist," Dr Shireen added.

Cabbie arrested for extorting Rs 450 from flyer at KIA

BENGALURU, DHNS: A cab driver was arrested for harassing and extorting Rs 450 from a woman after dropping her off at the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA), police said.

The cabbie has been identified as Nagesh, 42.

The woman had booked the cab on Rapido to travel from Sarjapur to the airport on February 21. The app showed a fare of Rs 982.

After reaching the airport, when she tried to pay Nagesh, he allegedly demanded more money. He also threatened to withhold her luggage if she did not pay the extra fare and abused her. She ended up paying Rs 1,448, according to the FIR.

The woman called the police, who arrived at the spot and asked Nagesh to return the balance.

Abused patrolmen

He abused and manhandled the patrolmen, too, the FIR noted.

The fracas took place between 8 am and 10.30 am at the departure parking lane at Terminal 2.

Rs 55-crore govt land reclaimed

BENGALURU, DHNS: Government land worth about Rs 55.02 crore has been freed from encroachments in Bengaluru Urban.

Jurisdictional tahsildars removed encroachments from burial grounds, stormwater drains, lakes, groves, grazing lands (gomala), B-kharab lands within private holdings, government platforms (katte), occupied survey numbers, and government kharab lands — spanning nine acres and 34.8 guntas in total.

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Silver Jubilee: VAPS Technosoft; Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji, Shivarathri Deshikendra Swamiji to attend; VAPS Akshaya Foundation Trust; Dr Babu Rajendra Prasad International Convention Centre, GKVK Campus; 4 pm.

CULTURAL

Play: 'Neeragannadi' by KY Narayanaswamy; Directed by B Suresha, Music by MD Pallavi; Ravindra Kalakshetra; 6.30 pm.

Sermon: 'Samagra Mahabharata'; Vyasanakere Prabhanjanacharya; Organised by Poornaprajna Vidyapeetha; Poornaprajna Vidyapeetha, Katriguppe Main Road; 6.30 pm.

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST

Partly cloudy sky

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	32.4°C
Minimum	19.6°C
Rainfall (as of 8:30 am)	--
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm)	52%
Sunset (Feb 23)	6:27 pm
Sunrise (Feb 24)	6:39 am
Moonrise	9:53 am
Moonset	10:53 pm

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

Need a hand? Write to us

Letters of grievances are pouring in and we are doing our best to accommodate as many as possible. Readers may write in to highlight civic problems affecting their locality and we will help address them in an interactive and effective manner.

Grievances and issues related to public utility agencies such as Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) and Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (Bescom) would be highlighted in the weekly column.

The writeups, which could be accompanied by photographs highlighting the problems, will be published on Mondays. Mail your grievances to: peoplesproblems @ deccanherald.co.in

Asphalt mud road near RR Nagar arch

The traffic police have recently cleared the debris from the proposed flyover project near the RR Nagar arch. The construction of this flyover began over three-and-a-half years ago to enable signal-free movement at the junction.

However, the cleared area has now become a muddy stretch that is being used by cars and two-wheelers. This temporary mud road generates significant dust, causing severe air pollution in the surrounding area. The situation poses a serious public health risk to residents, commuters, and pedestrians.

I sincerely request the authorities to asphalt this stretch at the earliest to prevent further pollution and inconvenience.

Chandra Kumar,
RR Nagar

This temporary mud road generates significant dust, causing severe air pollution in the surrounding area.

Traffic congestion and noise concerns

Over the past year, we have witnessed a rapid mushrooming of dark stores operated by quick-commerce companies in Ramachandrapura, Nanjappa Layout, and VR Pura.

Delivery executives frequently ride two-wheelers at high speeds and in a reckless manner, continuously sounding horns in residential areas and often avoiding the main roads throughout the day. Additionally, school vans rushing to pick up and drop off children add to the congestion.

The 30-foot-wide 2nd Main Road in Nanjappa Layout is increasingly being used for on-street parking by residents and is further burdened by commercial activity. Traffic density has risen significantly, as many motorists park along this stretch to avoid the parallel main road, thereby reducing the available space for smooth vehicular movement.

As a result, local residents find it difficult to sleep and live peacefully. Crossing the road has become particularly dangerous for children and the elderly. Minor accidents have become frequent at the junction of the 4th and 8th crossroads.

We appeal to the local police to take immediate measures to regulate vehicular movement by installing rumble strips and strictly enforcing action against the use of high-frequency horns.

The pollution control board must also strengthen its efforts to effectively regulate noise pollution and curb the manufacture and use of high-frequency horns.

Jeevan G Raosahib
Pedestrians' nightmare in Uttarahalli

Pedestrians' nightmare in Uttarahalli

Uttarahalli Road is perpetually congested with heavy traffic, making it extremely unsafe for pedestrians.

There is an urgent need to install a traffic control system immediately after Shani Mahatma Temple in Chikkalasandra. Several crossroads from both sides converge onto Uttarahalli Main Road.

At one such junction, an Iyengar bakery stands at the right-hand corner where BMTC buses halt. Pedestrians coming from the crossroads of KSRTC Layout and Chikkalasandra are forced to risk their lives while accessing the main road, as stationary buses block the view of oncoming vehicles from the right.

A few meters ahead towards Uttarahalli, on the right-hand corner, stands Vishal Mega Mart. The same dangerous situation prevails here, with vehicles from both sides of the adjoining crossroads entering the main road simultaneously.

The situation worsens during peak hours and in the evenings.

The authorities must conduct an immediate inspection of these two locations. Installing traffic signals and implementing proper traffic regulation measures would improve pedestrian safety.

SN Saraswathy,
Ramanjayanagar

PUBLIC NOTICE

Publics are hereby informed that my client **M/s DS-Max Properties Pvt. Ltd.**, having its office at No. 1794, 14th Main, 30th Cross, HBR Layout, 1st Stage, 5th Block, Bengaluru- 43 and intend to enter into Absolute Sale Deed with Owner/s **1. Sri S.P.Vijayareddy** s/o Sri Pillareddy, **2. Sri Suresh** s/o Sri Pillareddy and **3. Smt Jayalakshmi** w/o Late S.P.Shamannareddy are the absolute joint owner/s of Agricultural land property bearing Sy. No. **109/1**, which measuring **2 acre 21 guntas**, situated at **Thiruvaranga Village**, Anugondanahalli Hobli, Hoskote Taluk, Bangalore Rural District and bounded on **East by:** Road, **West by:** Rajakaluve, **North by:** Land of Sri Nyathappa, **South by:** Land of Sri Nyathappa and referred to as schedule property of **Item No. I**.

WHEREAS 1. Sri Ramareddy s/o Sri Nyathappa is the absolute owner of Agricultural land property bearing Sy. No. **110/2** of **27 guntas** and **15 guntas**, **2. Sri Thimmappa** s/o Sri Appanna is the absolute owner of Agricultural land property bearing Sy. No. **110/2** of **33.04 guntas**, **3. Smt Lakshmamma** w/o Sri Venkateshappa and **Smt Savithramma** w/o Sri Venkateshappa are the absolute joint owner/s of Agricultural land property bearing Sy. No. **110/2** of **1 acre**, **4. Sri T.V.Naveen Kumar** s/o Sri Venkataswamy is the absolute owner of Agricultural land property bearing Sy. No. **110/2** of **1 acre**, **5. Sri Venkatachalapathy** s/o Late V. Muniyappa, **Smt Sunandamma** d/o Late V.Muniyappa, **Smt Manjula** d/o Late V.Muniyappa, **Sri Ramesh Babu** s/o Late V.Muniyappa and **Sri Ramanjaneya** s/o Late V.Muniyappa are the absolute joint owner/s of Agricultural land property bearing Sy. No. **110/2** of **06.12 guntas**, which total measuring **4 acre 02 guntas**, all situated at **Thiruvaranga Village**, Anugondanahalli Hobli, Hoskote Taluk, Bangalore Rural District and bounded on **East by:** Land of Sy.No. 149, **West by:** Land of Sy.No. 111 & 112, **North by:** Land of Sy.No. 110/1, **South by:** Land of Sy.No. 109 and referred to as schedule property of **Item No. II**.

which total measuring of **Item No. I & II = 2 acre 21 guntas + 4 acre 02 guntas = 6 acre 23 guntas** and referred to as **"Schedule Property of Item No. I & II"**.

Any person or Any Authority or Any promoters having any asserting right, title, interest and claims to oppose for Absolute Sale Deed of property and further having any manner of right, title, claims etc., and may lodge their objections, claims over the property along with relevant papers in support of their claims, right to the below address within **7** days from the date of this notice, if any objections fails to comply, my client shall take further steps and deemed for entering into Absolute Sale Deed of property.

LINGARAJ. S. NADAGOUDA., ADVOCATE
No.1854, 17th Main, 30th 'B' Cross, HBR Layout, 1st Stage, 5th Block, Bangalore - 560 043.
Mob : 96204 74780 , 94481 35970

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

SELECTION OF AGENCY FOR SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT AND MEDIA ANALYSIS SERVICES FOR SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, invites application from the interested parties/Agencies on prescribed application form for the following work

Notice Inviting Application (NIA) No.	G.CPRO/SWR/SASMS/2026
Full Name of Service/Work	Selection of Agency for Social Media Management and Media Analysis Services For South Western Railway (for Two Years)
Appx. Total Cost of Service/Work (Exclusive of GST)	Rs. 2,51,00,000/- (Rs. Two Crore Fifty One Lakh Only) Exclusive of GST - per annum; or Rs. 5,02,00,000/- (Rs. Five Crore Two Lakh only) Exclusive of GST for two years.
Appx Total Cost of Service/Work (with GST)	Rs. 5,92,36,000/- with GST (Rs. Five Crore Ninety Two Lakh and Thirty Six Thousand Only) for two years.
Earnest Money Deposit	Rs. 4,46,180/- (Rs. Four Lakh Forty Six Thousand One Hundred and Eighty Only)
Cost of Application Form	Rs. 10,000/- + 18% GST = Rs.11,800/- (Non-Refundable) (Rs. Eleven Thousand Eight Hundred only) in cash across the Railway Counter or if downloaded from website - Demand Draft/Pay Order in favor of PFA, South Western Railway, Hubballi. (In case if Application Form is required by Post – Rs. 500/- will be charged extra)
Last Date of downloading Application Form from SWR's official Website/purchase from PR Office	Up to 12.00 hrs. on 16/03/2026
Last Date/Time of submission of Application	Up to 11.00 hrs. 17/03/2026
Date & Time of Opening of Applications	On 17/03/2026 at 11.30 hrs. onwards
Venue for Application Submission and Application opening	CPRO Office, Rail Soudha, GM's Office Building, 4th Floor, Gadag Road, Hubballi, Karnataka – 580020.

Particulars of the Website from where the Application Form Procedure of Selection and Terms & Conditions etc. may be downloaded : www.swr.Indianrailways.gov.in

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Leadership row may damage Cong image: Jarkiholi

BAGALKOT, DHNS: Senior minister Satish Jarkiholi on Sunday warned that the leadership row would damage the Congress party's image and that AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge had been urged to intervene and resolve it.

Speaking to reporters here, Jarkiholi said, "If the leadership issue is not resolved at the earliest, it has the potential to damage the party's image and cause administrative confusion. We have apprised the party leadership of the political developments and have asked them to intervene and clear the confusions," he said.

When asked about change in leadership after the budget, Jarkiholi said, "We haven't heard about any power-sharing deal. Siddaramaiah will continue as CM for the remaining period. It is up to the high command to take a call. All we want is that the leadership should clear the confusion," he said.

Elections to zilla, taluk panchayats before June: CM

KARWAR, DHNS: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has said that elections to Zilla and Taluk Panchayats in the state would be conducted before June this year.

Speaking after inaugurating 450-bed hospital of Karwar Institute of Medical Sciences and Gangavali-Manjaguni bridge in Ankola, the chief minister said that super specialty hospitals would be set up in every district of the state.

"The government has plans to establish a super specialty hospital in every district. Before that, we want to set up a government medical college in each district," Siddaramaiah said.

He said that as of now Karnataka has 22 government medical colleges and four more would come up this year. The chief minister said that the Centre has rejected the proposal for bringing "Halakki Vokkaliga" community under Scheduled Tribes, and that state government has decided to submit the proposal again.

Tourist special trains to Kashmir and Vaishno Devi

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Indian Railways, in association with private operators South Star and Tour Times, has announced summer special tourist trains to Kashmir and Vaishno Devi, each spanning 13 days.

The all-inclusive package tour begins on April 11, and bookings are open. The Indian Railways is offering a 33% subsidiary on the service.

The train will have stops at Jolarpettai, Bangarapet, Whitefield, Yelahanka, Penukonda, Dharmavaram, and Anantapur.

The Kashmir itinerary covers Agra, Srinagar, Sonmarg, Gulmarg, Amritsar and Delhi. The package begins at Rs 42,400 for Sleeper Class, Rs 54,000 for Third AC, Rs 61,000 for Second AC, and Rs 68,200 for First AC. The 13-day Vaishno Devi Holiday special covers Agra, Mathura, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Kurukshetra, Vaishno Devi, Amritsar and Delhi. The package begins at Rs 36,800 for Sleeper Class, Rs 48,700 for Third AC, Rs 54,300 for Second AC, and Rs 65,700 for First AC.

The train will be equipped with PA systems for onboard announcements, dedicated coach security and tour managers, travel insurance, hotels, sightseeing and transfers, and unlimited meals (onboard and offboard).

Passengers need to carry only luggage needed for night stay or sightseeing.

Unlike regular trains, this special tourist train is not available for booking on the IRCTC website. Reservations can only be made by contacting 9355021516 or visiting www.tourtimes.in, according to a release.

Study recommends pol quota, scholarships for Nadaf, Pinjaras

Suggests steps to uplift Muslim sub-groups

SUJAY B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

Political reservation (from local bodies to parliament), group housing facilities by the government, health safeguards, dedicated scholarships and financial assistance to artists and sportspersons are among a slew of measures suggested by an ethnographic study to uplift the Nadaf/ Pinajara communities.

The two communities are sub-groups within the Muslim community. While most Muslim sub-groups are in category 2B of the OBC list, sub-groups such as Nadafs, Pinjaras, Bazigars and Darvesh are in category 1 (most backward communities) of the OBC list.

DH has accessed the recommendations and observations of an yearlong study, conducted under Antropology Prof T T Basavangouda of Karnatak University (KU), Dharwad, at a cost of Rs 45.46 lakh.

It was submitted to the VC of the university on Friday and will next be sent to the D Devaraj Urs Research Institute, which comes under the Backward Classes Welfare Department, and then to the government. The government may either accept or reject the report.

Both the Pinjara and Nadaf communities are traditionally into cotton-carding. However, due to increasing economic hurdles and livelihood challenges, they are expanding into other professions.

Basavanagouda's team has divided its recommendations into four categories - economic, educational, health and political/social.

As part of economic measures, the report has recommended providing skill-based training to modernise the cotton carding occupation, providing land to construct ventilated godowns for hiring more workers. It has also recommended providing alternative livelihood options. Alongside scholarships to students and monthly financial assistance to sports persons, the report has also suggested implementing remedial education programmes and counselling services to identify and address the root causes of high dropout.

Shifting from slums

The report has urged the government to take necessary steps to shift families of Nadaf and Pinjara communities residing in slum areas to a clean environment.

The study has also recommended conducting awareness campaigns about the health risks faced by workers in the traditional occupation, such as respiratory and lung diseases from cotton particles.

Alongside the Nadaf and Pinjara communities, similar ethnographic studies have also been commissioned for eight nomadic communities coming under the OBC list — Shikkaligar, Gopala, Baazigar, Nandiwaala – Joshi – Pulmaali, Geesadi, Haavadiga, Gaarudiga and Bailu Pattara.

In Karnataka, nomadic communities are present in the OBC, SC and ST lists.

Visiting Delhi normal practice, says Shivakumar

BENGALURU, DHNS

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar claimed on Sunday that visiting Delhi was a 'normal practice' and that he goes to Delhi whenever the high command calls.

Shivakumar

"Who else will go to Delhi? We have to go when called. It is a normal practice," he told reporters. Stating that the trade deal with the US was affecting Indian farmers 'negatively', he said: "Rahul Gandhi will do whatever is needed to protect the interests of the country. The trade deal with the US will affect farmers of our country negatively. As a leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi will raise all these issues.

"I and CM are visiting Karwar today to inaugurate the medical university. Tomorrow, we have the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) convention in Chikkaballapur for Kolar and Chikkaballapur districts. AICC General Secretary Surjewala is also attending the convention. Similar programmes will be held in other districts too," he said.

SERPENT WORSHIP

A Nagapatri performs Nagamandala ritual, in Muniyal village of Udupi district on Sunday. PTI PHOTO

6 pythons rescued from a house in Karwar

KARWAR (UTTARA KANNADA DISTRICT), DHNS: Six pythons were rescued from a house in Katinakona in Karwar on Sunday, triggering panic in the local residents.

The pythons were found amid construction material stocked on the premises of a house. Forest Guard Gopal Naika, who rescued the pythons, said that they measured 8-12 feet in length. He said that all of them were released into forest. "Initial days of summer is the mating season for snakes. It is natural for males of the species to come in search of females for mating. Hence they are found in large number in one location," Naika explained.

Forest department personnel rescue a python in Karwar on Sunday.

Safari resumes at Bandipur Tiger Reserve after three months

MYSURU, DHNS: After a gap of about three months, safaris resumed at Nagarahole and Bandipur Tiger Reserves on Sunday.

The safaris were banned on November 7, 2025 owing to demands by farmers, followed by four incidents of human-animal conflicts between October 26 and November 7 on the fringes of BTR in Sargur taluk of Mysuru district, resulting in the death of three farmers.

However, following a report of a technical committee to assess eco tourism carrying capacity, Minister for Forest, Ecology and Environment Eshwar B Khandre announced the decision to lift the ban in a phased manner, by restricting timings and trips with various conditions. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and Chief Wildlife Warden Kumar Pushkar issued an order in this regard last Saturday.

Safari vehicles carry tourists at Bandipur Tiger Reserve in Chamarajanagar district on Sunday.

In Bandipur Tiger Reserve ecotourism range, the department has permitted 31 trips including 19 by the Forest department and 12 by Jungle Lodges and Resorts at 2.5-hour per trip; and for only five hours per day from 6.30 am to 9 am and 3.30 pm to 6 pm.

In Nagarahole Tiger Reserve, (Sunkadakatte ecotourism range) department has permitted 36 trips including 13 by forest department and 23 by JLR, at three hour per trip; and for six hours per day from 6.30 am to 9.30 pm and 3 pm to 6 pm. In NTR, (near Veeranahosahalli ecotourism range), the authorities have permitted 14 trips including six by forest department and eight by JLR at two hours per trip; for four hours per day from 7 am to 9 am and 3 pm to 5 pm.

HDK's 'caste-for-chair' remark comment is a joke: Siddu

Accuses HDK-HDD of 'finishing' Vokkaliga leaders; Union min hits back

BENGALURU, DHNS

Siddaramaiah

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday dismissed Union Heavy Industries and Steel Minister H D Kumaraswamy's statement about him 'dragging caste for chair' as a joke.

"I am not surprised by the response to my article by JD(S) leader and Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy. I have treated his comment 'Siddaramaiah has dragged caste for chair' as joke. Kumaraswamy and his father H D Deve Gowda are definitely not casteist. They are against their own community. They believe in family politics."

Kumaraswamy's comment was in reaction to an article by Siddaramaiah for a Kannada daily on February 20, where the chief minister had claimed: "My caste is also a reason for many of the attacks and accusations against me. They burn with rage that a shepherd who should have herded sheep became a chief minister and is tabling several Budgets by standing on equal footing with financial experts."

Stepping up his attack on the first family of the JD(S), the chief minister said: "For them (Deve Gowda and Kumaraswamy), caste is just a vote bank. For the sake of their greed, they have finished leaders from their own community."

He wondered why Vokkaliga leaders such as Puttaswamy Gowda, C S Puttegowda, Javaregowda, K M Vishwanath, Hanumegowda, K N Nagegowda, K R Pete Krishna, Y K Ramaiah, C Byre Gowda, Bacche Gowda, B L Shankar, C Narayanaswamy, Chalauvarayaswamy and others left Deve Gowda and came out.

Only the Congress had recognised Vokkaliga leaders and politically moulded them, Siddaramaiah claimed.

HDK retaliates

Kumaraswamy hit back at Siddaramaiah, accusing the latter of "seeking shelter under those 13 persons for his political selfishness."

"I read the list of Vokkaliga leaders that you mentioned. By mentioning their names, you have made fun of them too... For your political selfishness, you have sought shelter under those 13 persons."

"All of them enjoyed power due to Deve Gowda's hard-work, grew well and jumped ship just like you. If Deve Gowda had considered family as ultimate, none of them, including you, would've become MLAs, ministers and MPs. What do you say? All of you axed the tree that gave you shelter."

He urged Siddaramaiah to show "large-heartedness" about the Vokkaligas and speak about the purported "power-sharing" pact between the chief minister and his deputy D K Shivakumar (a Vokkaliga).

Applications invited to set up KarnatakaOne centres

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Bengaluru Urban district administration has invited online applications to establish KarnatakaOne centres at vacant locations.

The locations where KarnatakaOne centres can be established include:

Anekal taluk: Anekal, Attibele, Bommasandra, Chandapura, Jigani, Hebbagodi

Bengaluru North taluk: Chikkabanavara, Madanayakanahalli

Bengaluru South taluk: Konappana Agrahara, Doddathoguru Yelahanka taluk: Hunasamaranahalli

Interested candidates can submit their applications at https://www.karnatakaone.gov.in/public/franchiseeTerms by March 2, 2026.

Applications submitted through any other mode will not be considered, according to a release.

Two held for communal tension in Bagalkot

BAGALKOT, PTI: Two persons have been arrested in connection with communal clashes during a Shivaji Jayanti procession in Bagalkot, police said on Sunday.

An FIR was registered following the incident in the Qila Oni area, where stones were allegedly thrown during the procession.

"Based on video footage and photographic evidence, we have arrested two persons in connection with the stone-pelting," a police officer said.

Police said the duo had been booked on charges of attempting to incite violence, obstructing police personnel from discharging their duties and damaging private property. "The accused have been remanded in judicial custody," the officer added.

The city witnessed communal clashes when stones and slippers were reportedly hurled at a Shivaji Jayanti procession near a mosque at Qila Oni locality on Thursday.

Penukonda-Dharmavaram doubling project completed

BENGALURU, DHNS

The South Western Railway (SWR) said it had commissioned the 30.04-km doubling section between Makajipalli and Dharmavaram as part of the Penukonda–Dharmavaram doubling project, following the statutory inspection conducted by the Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS).

The project involved constructing 66 minor bridges, 15 road underbridges (RUBs), one foot overbridge (FOB), and developing one station yard comprising five lines.

In addition, the SWR also commissioned one Intermediate Block Hut (IBH) between Makajipalli and Nagsamudram to enhance operational efficiency and improve line capacity.

Executing the works required close coordination with the South Central Railway, particularly for work carried out at the Dharmavaram station.

A speed trial was conducted at a maximum speed of 121 kmph, during which the Oscillation Monitoring System (OMS) showed no abnormal peaks. Based on the inspection and trial results, the CRS authorised the section for operation at a maximum speed of 110 kmph.

With the commissioning of this stretch, the entire doubling project between Penukonda and Dharmavaram is complete. The SWR said it had opened this section at the highest sanctioned speed in its history: 110 kmph.

Holi special trains to Bengal, Jharkhand & Uttarakhand

BENGALURU, DHNS: The South Western Railway (SWR) will run the following special trains connecting Bengaluru to West Bengal, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand to clear the extra rush of passengers during Holi:

Train number 06565 will depart from SMVT Bengaluru at 11.40 pm on Sundays (Feb 22, March 1 and 8) to reach Malda Town (West Bengal) at 4.30 pm on Tuesdays.

In the return direction, train number 06566 will depart from Malda Town at 4 pm on Wednesdays (Feb 25, March 4 and 11) to arrive at SMVT Bengaluru at 12.45 pm on Fridays.

Train number 06563 will depart from Yeshwantpur at 7.30 am on Saturdays (Feb 28, March 7, 14, 21, 28, April 4, 11, 18 and 25) to reach Dhanbad (Jharkhand) at 10.15 am on Mondays.

In the return direction, train number 06564 will depart from Dhanbad at 8.45 pm on Mondays (Feb 23, March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, April 6, 13, 20 and 27) to arrive at Yeshwantpur on Wednesdays at 9.30 pm.

Train number 06597 will depart from Yeshwanpur at 7 am on Thursdays (March 5, 12, 19, 26, April 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30) and reach Yog Nagari Rikshikesh (Uttarakhand) at 10.20 am on Saturdays.

In the return direction, train number 06598 will depart from Yog Nagari Rishikesh at 5.55 pm on Saturdays (March 7, 14, 21, 28, April 4, 11, 18, 25 and May 2) to arrive at Yeshwantpur at 7.45 pm on Mondays.

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WALK - IN - INTERVIEW

In order to prepare the 2026-27 Selection List (Panel) of Teachers on Full / Part Time Contract basis for PM SHRI Kendriya Vidyalaya MEG & Center, Bangalore, the interview of the candidates (18 to 65 age group) will be conducted. All the candidates should appear for interview at PM SHRI MEG &Center at their own cost along with original and photocopies of certificates and passport size photograph. The registration for all the posts will be done.

Interview Date	Post
05.03.2026	PGT – English, Hindi, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Computer Science, Commerce, Economics, History, Geography, Political Science.
	Yoga instructor, Dance Teacher / Music Teacher, Sports Coach, Art Education Instructor, Computer Instructor, Nurse, Special Educator and Counsellor, Band Instructor, AI / ATL instructor.
06.03.2026	TGT - English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Mathematics, Science, Social Science.
06.03.2026	PRT - Primary Teacher, Balavatika and Kannada Teacher

Note : For Qualification and other details kindly visit the Website : www.megcentre.kvs.ac.in.

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3 killed in hit-and-run accident

HIRIYUR (CHITRADURGA DISTRICT), DHNS: Three persons died on the spot after a unknown vehicle hit a minibus they were travelling, on NH-48, near Patrehalli in Hiriyur taluk on Sunday.

The deceased are Srikanth (24), Chandru (25) and Mustafa (27), all residents of Karatagi in Koppal district. Two more passengers in the bus escaped unhurt. The accident occurred when victims were returning from Kolar after purchasing the minibus. Rural police have registered a case.

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India delays US trade talks...

US trade, from Page 1

India's opposition Congress party had called for the interim pact to be put on hold, urging a renegotiation and questioning Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to issue a joint statement before the court's ruling.

On Saturday, the Indian Commerce ministry said it was studying the implications of the judgment and later US announcements.

Last week, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said the interim pact could take effect in April, after outstanding issues were resolved during the delegation's visit to Washington.

Cycling culture a non-starter in all 7 smart cities across Karnataka

'Promoters failed to impress public on project benefits'

HARSHA
MANGALURU, DHNS

After innumerable meetings and government spending lakhs, a 'vibrant cycling culture' remains absent in all seven 'smart cities' across Karnataka.

Bengaluru-based Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT), which has been at the forefront of initiatives aimed at promoting a cycling culture in urban areas, sought a refund of the entire funds from Mangaluru Smart City Limited (MSCL) for having failed to set up dedicated cycle lanes in the port city within the deadline, according to the information obtained under RTI by *DH*.

In July 2020, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) launched 'Cycles 4 change' in order to inspire and support cities to implement cycling-friendly initiatives.

The DULT, which had launched 'Green Links' scheme, aimed at implementing cycling-friendly streets as early as 2018, announced funding for all Cycles 4 Change pilot projects in seven smart cities (Mangaluru, Bengaluru, Belagavi, Davangere, Hubballi-Dharwad, Tumakuru and Shivamogga).

The MSCL submitted a 'cycle of commute' project aimed at providing independent bicycle mobility tracks for schoolchildren, cycling enthusiasts and others at a total cost of Rs 8.16 crore. The proposed 12-km cycle track connected 20 public buildings and 26 educational institutions.

A file picture of cycle stand constructed by Davangere Smart City Limited. The agency dropped the bicycle project after receiving no response from public, according to RTI reply.

The DULT approved the project and released the first installment of Rs 71,52,000. The MSCL floated tenders for the project to be implemented in two packages.

The first package covered a 3.95 km stretch from Bolar riverfront to Mini Vidhan Soudha (Rs 2.72 cr). The second package covered the stretch from Townhall underpass to TMA Pai hall and a dedicated cycle lane from Marnamikatte to Father Mullers road; SL Mathias road to Sturrock road (Rs 3.72 cr). But work on 80 m out of total 7440 m work could be taken up due to in-completion of utility works like 24x7 underground water supply lines, gas pipeline among others.

"The bicycle project in Mangaluru could not be completed despite getting a six-month extension , and it was shelved," the RTI information revealed. Davangere Smart City Limited (DSCL) also dropped the project after receiving no response from public. Tumakuru Smart City Limited's bicycle project is mired in litigation with a contractor approaching High Court," according to information obtained under the RTI.

The RTI information revealed that Belagavi (Rs 4.75 cr), Shivamogga (34 kms), Hubballi-Dharwad (12 km) had completed the project. Sources in the DULT told *DH* that the cycle lanes in these cities lack bollards, barricades and were not a safe for cyclists. A former commissioner of Bengaluru police and member of committee for cycling project in Bengaluru (CCPB) says smart cities failed to connect with their citizens and develop a unified vision for cycling.

"Magisterial order should have been passed and spaces should have been reclaimed for cycle lanes," he said.

Bengaluru Smart City Limited did not respond to RTI even after submitting appeals to the DULT. Monika Kashkari, serving as special officer, DULT, could not be reached and did not respond to emails from *DH*.

MSCL repays funds

After finding out that no work had been carried out during site inspection, DULT issued a letter to Mangaluru Smart City Limited seeking a total refund of the released amount. The MSCL after deducting the amount utilised for the bicycle project (Rs 50,80,937) refunded Rs 25,46,825.

An expert on urban issues told *DH* that the promoters had failed to impress the public on what bicycle lanes can do like decongest traffic. We R Cycling club (WERC) Secretary Harniish J Raj said the project failed as bureaucrats lacked the will.

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Spl court remands BJP MLA, two PAs in judicial custody till March 3

Lokayukta sleuths arrested Shirahatti MLA, two others in bribery case

GADAG/BENGALURU, DHNS

A Bengaluru court on Sunday remanded BJP MLA Chandru Lamani in judicial custody in connection with a bribery case.

Lamani was produced before the Special Court for Elected Representatives by the Karnataka Lokayukta investigators, who had arrested him in Gadag district on Saturday.

The court then sent the Shirahatti MLA to judicial custody till March 3.

On Saturday afternoon, the Lokayukta police trapped the MLA and his personal assistants Manjunath Valmiki and Guru Nayak, when they received Rs 5 lakh bribe at Balaji Hospital owned by Lamani, at Lakshmeshwara in Gadag.

The MLA allegedly demanded Rs 11 lakh from a contractor in connection with works in the Minor Irrigation Department.

According to sources, during the Lokayukta raid, Nayak allegedly threw an envelope containing Rs 50,000 cash into the compound of a private school behind the hospital. The Lokayukta police seized the cash, along with Rs 4.50 lakh found at the hospital, they said.

A case was registered under the Prevention of Corruption (PC) Act, and a probe was initiated.

The officials took the MLA and his two personal assistants - Valmiki and Naik - into their custody and subjected the suspects to medical check-up at the district hospital in Gadag.

The Lokayukta officials grilled the suspects for over 10 hours till 1.30 am on Sunday before taking them to Bengaluru.

According to Lokayukta officials, the alleged bribe was linked to Minor Irrigation Department works, including the construction of retaining walls along a road at Sankadal village. The suspects had demanded a 12% cut (Rs 11 lakh) from the complainant to execute the project, and the first instalment of Rs 5 lakh was accepted during the trap.

'30% to 40% of legislators demand cut'

Alleging that around 30% to 40% legislators, cutting across the party lines, demand a cut in the works from contractors, Karnataka State Contractors' Association president R Manjunath said on Sunday that the same had been brought to the notice of the chief minister.

The BJP MLA's trap in Gadag district was part of this practice, he added.

Speaking to reporters in Hosapete, the KSCA president said, "Earlier, commission was taken during the passing/clearing the bills. Now, they seek the cut at the Bhoomi puja level itself. The officials act as middlemen... Many contractors are reeling under the mounting debts because of this practice (commission raj)."

"I have never levelled allegations of '60% commission sarkara' against the Congress government. My statements have been twisted. It is true that the Congress party cornered the previous BJP government using the former KSCA president's allegations. We have not taken the similar path. All we want is the government to clear the pending bills of contractors amounting to Rs 37,000 crore," he said.

Manjunath said that the contractors across the state will stage a symbolic present on March 6 by stalling their works for a day.

BJP cries conspiracy

Alleging a conspiracy by the Congress behind the Lokayukta raid on the MLA, BJP workers created a ruckus when the Lokayukta officials were taking the suspects to Bengaluru in the small hours of Sunday. They got into heated arguments with the police.

The complainant-contractor, Vijay Pujar, is the secretary of Mulgund Block Youth Congress SC wing. The Lokayukta raids against Lamani is a conspiracy by the Congress, the workers alleged.

Farmers stage a protest with the body of the woman killed in elephant attack, at Kadabagere on Chikkamagaluru-Sringeri highway on Sunday.

Woman dies in jumbo attack; protest blocks traffic for 9 hrs

CHIKKAMAGALURU, DHNS: Two farmers sustained injuries as the police resorted to caning during a protest against death of a woman in an elephant attack, in Chikkamagaluru district on Sunday.

Boramma (40) of Kudligi taluk in Vijayanagara district died after a jumbo attacked her at Hyarambipura near Hunasehalli in Chikkamagaluru taluk on Sunday. She was part of a group of labourers who went to work at an estate.

Local farmers intercepted a pick-up vehicle by which body was being transported. They kept the body on road near Kadabagere in Balehonnur taluk and began a protest. Soon farmers and political leaders from across the district descended on the spot and blocked traffic on Chikkamagaluru-Balehonnur state highway. Thousands of passengers were put into inconvenience as vehicles piled up on both sides for over three kilometres. The stretch was blocked for traffic from 9 am to 6 pm.

The protesters demanded that deputy commissioner (DC), superintendent of police (SP) and Forest minister must come to the spot. Since no one turned till 4 pm, the enraged farmers decided to stage a protest by keeping the body in front of the DC's office in Chikkamagaluru. By this time, DC Nagaraj, SP Jithendra Dayam and MLA T D Rajegowda came to the spot. The protesters demanded a compensation of Rs 50 lakh to the family of the deceased.

Meanwhile, the relatives of the deceased arrived from Vijayanagara and informed that they would shift the body to their native place. The police forcefully shifted the body to the ambulance. Enraged by this action, the farmers staged protest. The police resorted to lathi charge to disperse the crowd. The body was transported to Vijayanagara amidst this melee.

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CHANGE OF NAME
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CHANGE OF NAME
We, PHANINDRA VADHRI V S S and **PADMA GOWRI VADHRI** R/a #B-203, Aspen Woods Apartment, Doddakammanahalli Main Road, Near Nandi Deepa Apartment, Doddakammanahalli, Bangalore-560076 have changed our minor Daughter's Name from **VADHRI VENKATA SRI PAVANI SARVADHI** to **SARVADHI VADHRI (DOB: 23-11-2011)** vide affidavit dated: 16.02.2026 sworn before Notary Aravind Patil G.G. Bangalore.

CHANGE OF NAME
We, PHANINDRA VADHRI V S S and **PADMA GOWRI VADHRI** R/a #B-203, Aspen Woods Apartment, Doddakammanahalli Main Road, Near Nandi Deepa Apartment, Doddakammanahalli, Bangalore- 560076 have changed our minor Son's Name from **VADHRI VENKATA KARTHIKEYA SHREYANSH** to **SHREYANSH VADHRI (DOB: 31-07-2015)** vide affidavit dated: 17.02.2026 sworn before Notary Aravind Patil G.G. Bangalore.

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I, RAJESH S/o MALAPPA SUBRAY MAHALE aged about 55 years, residing at No.903, 19th Main, Jnanabharathi 2nd Stage, Near S.S. Choultry, Mariyappanapalya Bangalore-560056. have changed my name to **RAJESH M MAHALE** vide affidavit dated: 19.02.2026 sworn before notary Devaraja. E, Bangalore.

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Lead contamination in 26% of veg samples...

Contamination, from Page 1

The CPCB, which argued that heavy metals and pesticide analysis had to be carried out by FSSAI-approved laboratories, had set up a five-member committee that collected 72 samples of vegetables. Of the total samples, 53 were collected from markets in Nelamangala, Rajajinagar and Kolar while the rest were from agriculture fields in Nelamangala, Kolar and Chikkaballapur.

19 contaminated samples

Of the 72 samples drawn by the committee, 19 contained lead higher than the prescribed limits as per the results of the test conducted in a FSSAI approved laboratory.

While the EMPRI report had flagged contamination of many heavy metals, the CPCB tests, however, found that lead was the sole contaminant, exceeding the limits set by the Food Safety and Standards Regulations (FSSR).

The sample of brinjal, branded as organic, contained 1.953 mg/kg of lead, about 20 times more than the prescribed limit of 0.1 mg/kg. It was about 18 times higher than the limit in little gourds (tondekai). Flat bean had 1.825 mg/kg of lead, nine times higher than the prescribed limit of 0.2 mg/kg.

Leafy greens and cabbage samples contained five times more amount of lead than the prescribed limit of 0.3 mg/kg. Cucumber, ridge gourd, capsicum, beetroot, bitter gourd, turnip, squash and chilli bajji were among the other samples that were found to have more lead than the amount prescribed by FSSR.

The team also collected 26 soil samples from 13 locations in Kolar, Chikkaballapur and Nelamangala. As many as 23 samples were found to be contaminated.

To a question on the exclusion of vegetable growing areas in the outskirts of southwest Bengaluru, a member of the committee said the report should be seen as a preliminary effort in identifying the potential risks. "This should be treated as a starting point. We need regular and comprehensive studies at the local level led by agriculture departments and agriculture universities to understand the extent of contamination and find remedial measures," he said.

The report, on its part, recommended further studies and building awareness among farmers on the use of pesticides.

Banned pesticides

The tests found residues of 12 pesticides exceeding the limit prescribed by the FSSR standards. Capsicum, chilli bajji, ginger and cucumber were the four vegetables that had high amounts of pesticides.

Among the pesticides found was the highly toxic monocrotophos, which was banned in 2023 in India with an additional year to clear the stocks. The samples of chilli bajji contained two times more monocrotophos than the prescribed limit of 0.2 mg/kg.

Some of the other pesticides like acephate, ethion, fipronil and profenofos have been banned in the European Union in view of their toxicity.

Help to friend turns into Rs 7-cr cybercrime...

Cybercrime, from Page 1

Since the account was in the teen's name, it triggered a physical verification. Also, banks receive alerts of suspicious transactions from the Union government so they can block money-laundering attempts. The phone number linked with the bank was also changed later, the officer explained.

Sangam approached the North Cybercrime Police, which registered an FIR on February 20 and arrested a 23-year-old suspect the next day. Ayush, however, is yet to be traced.

"We arrested the person on suspicion of operating the mule account to launder the proceeds of crime. He is the first suspect held so far. We suspect that Ayush sold/lent the victim's bank account on Telegram to cybercriminals located abroad, who later recruited the arrested suspect to operate the account using a work-from-home ruse. This is a well-oiled network spread across the state, and efforts led by Director General of Police (Cyber Command), Pronab Mohanty, to dismantle it are underway.," the officer quoted previously said.

AI summit protest: Modi blasts Cong's 'naked and dirty' politics

Modi, from Page 1

The Indian Youth Congress held a "shirtless" demonstration last week at Bharat Mandapam, the venue of the AI Impact Summit.

The nine IYC workers entered a pavilion, shouting slogans against the Indo-US trade deal and accusing the Modi government of compromising India's interests.

Seeking to corner Congress leadership, Modi extended gratitude towards regional outfits, including some Congress allies, that expressed reservations on the form and venue of protest chosen by the youth wing of the party.

"Did DMK, TMC, BSP, and National Conference do anything wrong? No, they didn't," the prime minister said.

"To become the prime minister, one has to win the hearts of the people. You can't become the prime minister by sending women MPs to capture the PM's seat," he added in an apparent reference to the just-concluded Budget session of Parliament that witnessed extended disruption over former army chief General MM Naravane's unpublished memoirs.

The Congress MPs had protested in the house, accusing the LS speaker of not allowing the Leader of the Opposition to make his speech.

In the continuing melee, Prime Minister Narendra Modi could not participate in the debate on the Presidential address.

The speaker Om Birla, in a statement, said he had said the PM did not come to the House amid concerns over disorder. The Congress, with its allies, in response, submitted a notice to move a no-confidence motion against the Speaker, which will be taken up when the house reconvenes on March 9.

Lutyens out, Rajaji in at Rashtrapati Bhavan

NEW DELHI, DHNS & PTI: The statue of Edwin Lutyens — who designed New Delhi as the imperial capital of British India — would be replaced by that of C Rajgopalachari, the first Indian governor general of the country after Independence, announced Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday.

"A statue of British architect Edwin Lutyens stands in Rashtrapati Bhavan. Now, this statue will be replaced by a statue of Rajaji (C Rajagopalachari)," he said in his monthly radio broadcast "Mann Ki Baat".

Modi mentioned that during the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav,' he had discussed the 'Panch-Pran' from the Red Fort, highlighting the importance of freeing oneself from the mentality of slavery.

Affirming that the Rashtrapati Bhavan is taking a significant step forward in this regard, he announced that the 'Rajaji Utsav' will be celebrated on February 23, during which the statue of C Rajagopalachari will be unveiled in the central courtyard of Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Rajagopalachari was a Congress veteran and a freedom fighter who was also the premier of the Madras Presidency before India gained Independence in 1947.

He later broke away from the Congress to launch the Swatantra Party. He was also the first recipient of the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award.

Modi's announcement on installing Rajaji's statue in the President's House comes just ahead of the Tamil Nadu Assembly polls.

Since it came to power at the Centre, the BJP-led NDA government has bestowed the Bharat Ratna on many leaders.

Assamese singer and cultural icon Bhupen Hazarika was given the honour posthumously just ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. Former President and Congress stalwart Pranab Mukherjee was given the award the same year.

Meanwhile, the announcement of a Bharat Ratna for OBC stalwart and former Bihar chief minister Karpoori Thakur came just ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

From Kashmir to Jammu: Power balance shows signs of change

Delimitation, infra push and recruitment trends mark structural shift

ZULFIKAR MAJID
SRINAGAR, DHNS

For decades, the political centre of gravity in Jammu and Kashmir lay firmly in Srinagar.

Governments were shaped in the Valley, chief ministers almost invariably came from Kashmir, and the dominant narrative of identity and autonomy flowed from there. Jammu often articulated grievance — of under-representation, neglect and imbalance.

More than six years after the abrogation of Article 370 and the reorganisation of the erstwhile state into a Union Territory, that old asymmetry appears to be narrowing.

The first structural shift came in August 2019, when decision-making moved from an elected political executive to a centrally appointed administration led by the Lieutenant Governor. With police and public order vested in the Lok Bhavan, the locus of authority fundamentally changed.

The second turning point was the 2022 Delimitation Commission award. Assembly seats in Jammu increased from 37 to 43, while Kashmir's rose from 46 to 47. Though the Valley retains a slight numerical edge, Jammu is now close to parity for the first time since the restoration of electoral politics in 1996.

Political analyst Gul Mohammad Wani says the shift is "structural, not episodic". According to him, "Delimitation has altered coalition mathematics permanently. Even if Kashmir remains numerically larger, Jammu can now decisively influence government formation."

REGIONAL EQUATION

- Srinagar long shaped governments and autonomy; Jammu faced neglect
- Asymmetry has narrowed six years after abrogation of Article 370
- After 2022 delimitation, Jammu seats rose from 37 to 43
- Analysts call the shift 'structural, not episodic'

The BJP has described delimitation as a long-overdue correction of "historic under-representation".

Political analyst Hari Om, often associated with the BJP's nationalist perspectives, has argued that previous delimitation exercises were "Kashmir-centric" and designed to ensure dominance over the Jammu region.

He supported the 2022 Delimitation Commission's efforts to increase seats in Jammu as a move to address this, although he has argued that even with the new seats, the political empowerment of Jammu is not fully achieved.

Kashmir-based leaders disagree. National Conference leader and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has called the exercise "politically skewed", while PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti has alleged it was aimed at "re-engineering the region's political identity".

Major infrastructure investments — including IIT Jammu and IIM Jammu, highway corridors and industrial estates — have been concentrated in the Jammu division. In several recent recruitment drives and competitive examinations, Jammu-based candidates have secured a larger share of selections.

Wani, however, cautions against reading too much into episodic recruitment data. "Competitive exams reflect preparation ecosystems. Jammu has invested heavily in coaching infrastructure in recent years. That naturally affects outcomes," he said.

It is against this backdrop that two recent controversies have reignited debate over regional balance.

In January, the National Medical Commission revoked approval for 50 MBBS seats for the 2025-26 session at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence (SMVDIME), citing infrastructure and faculty deficiencies.

The college had faced protests after 46 of its 50 first-batch students were Muslims. Hindu groups demanded "local preference", while authorities maintained admissions were strictly merit-based under NEET norms.

Modi seeks to isolate Congress over AI Summit protest, Parl disruptions

Thanks Opposition allies for condemning Delhi protest

SANJAY PANDEY
LUCKNOW, DHNS

In what appeared to be a calculated political move ahead of next year's Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday sought to isolate the Congress over the "shirtless protest" by its workers at the recent AI Summit in Delhi and disruptions in Parliament.

At a public meeting after flagging off the Meerut Metro and the Namo Bharat Train in Meerut in the state, he thanked the Congress' alliance partners for condemning the "shirtless protest".

"I am happy that all the alliance partners of the Congress have shown the courage to condemn the Delhi incident... I publicly express my gratitude to them for it," he said.

Going further in his attempt to isolate the main Opposition party at the Centre, Modi said the Congress did not allow its alliance partners to speak in Parliament.

"They are unable to perform in Parliament and do not allow their allies to speak. By not allowing Parliament to function, it is their allies who suffer the most," he said.

NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister

"The crazy (sarfirae) and reckless (be-lagaam) leaders of the Congress are bent on destroying the country.

The Prime Minister also asked the media not to club the Congress' behaviour in Parliament with that of the entire Opposition.

"You (media) are shielding the Congress by doing this... The Opposition and the others have now understood... The Congress commits sins, and they have to pay for them," he said.

The Congress' Uttar Pradesh ally Samajwadi Party's president Akhilesh Yadav and Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati sharply criticised the party over the AI Summit protest. "We may have internal differences, but whatever the Congress did during the event was not proper," said Akhilesh.

'Asking questions is our right': Congress

NEW DELHI, DHNS & PTI: With Prime Minister Narendra Modi attacking the main Opposition party over protests in Parliament and at AI Summit, Congress on Sunday said he should remember that protest is a right while alleging that he "compromised" India's interest by giving the green signal for the India-US trade deal.

In Meerut, Modi attacked the Congress over the women MPs leading the protest against the government in Lok Sabha and Youth Congress activists leading a "shirtless" protest at the recently concluded AI Summit.

Hitting back at the prime minister, the Congress said in a post on X, "Asking questions is our right. It is the responsibility of the youth of this country. Narendra Modi is compromised. He cannot suppress our voices to protect himself."

Security personnel attempt to control Youth Congress activists during a protest against the Centre, in Shimla. PTI

Congress Lok Sabha Whip Manickam Tagore said it was "very unfortunate" that the prime minister had forgotten that the protests in Parliament were because of not allowing Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi to speak.

"For two days, he tried to speak. It was not allowed. Eight of us were suspended. When the LoP was not allowed, only then did women MPs protest. You were scared to come to the House. It is not that the women MPs who belong to the Dalit and Backward Communities were misbehaving. They were protesting, and protest is a right," he said.

'PM compromised'

Accusing him of being "compromised", Tagore said Modi should not demean the office of the Prime Minister while alleging that the agriculture, MSME and textile sectors have faced trouble because of his policies.

Country first, not politics: West Bengal minister

KOLKATA, PTI: West Bengal Minister of Information Technology and Electronics, Babul Supriyo, on Sunday criticised the recent "shirtless protest" by Indian Youth Congress (IYC) workers at an AI summit in New Delhi, stating that political fight should never be at the expense of the country's honour.

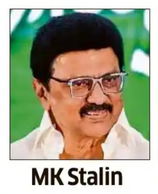
"The shirtless protest by members of the Indian Youth Congress at the AI Summit reflects poor judgement. At a forum attended by international leaders and global business figures, such conduct sends a wrong message about our national priorities," he said in an X post.

Babul Supriyo

Democracy guarantees the right to protest, but it also demands responsibility. When representing India before the world, partisan theatrics must give way to maturity and restraint, the Trinamool Congress legislator said.

"Political differences can be fought relentlessly but never at the expense of the nation's honour and dignity," the minister said.

Venugopal, Stalin hold seat talks amid alliance strain



MK Stalin

KC Venugopal

CHENNIA, DHNS: Amid rumblings within the alliance ahead of Tamil Nadu Assembly polls, Congress General Secretary KC Venugopal flew into Chennai on Sunday night and held consultations with Chief Minister MK Stalin over the number of seats to be allotted to the party in the DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance (SPA).

The Congress was represented by Venugopal and former Chhattisgarh deputy chief minister TS Singh Deo, while Stalin and Kanimozhi led the negotiations from the DMK's side.

AICC in-charge Girish Chodankar and Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) chief K Selva Perunthagai, who accompanied Venugopal, are believed to have been excluded from the discussions. The meeting assumes significance in the wake of leaders from the DMK and Congress sparring on the issue of power-sharing and the number of seats to be allotted for the national party.

The meeting also came amid Stalin ruling out any power-sharing with alliance partners.

DMK sources told *DH* that the party insisted it would not engage with Chodankar, who is seen as responsible for the strain in the two-decade-old alliance. As a result, Venugopal led the discussions. The Congress delegation is understood to have handed over a "sealed cover" from the high command to Stalin.

"Sunday's meeting was inconclusive. There may be one more meeting before finalising the agreement. The indication is that the deal will be sealed in a week's time," the source said, adding that the meeting's goal was to iron out differences between the two parties and arrive at an amicable solution before the polls.

While the Congress is demanding over 30 seats, the DMK is ready to give 27 or 28, up from 25 seats the party was allotted in the 2021 polls. "The party is also demanding a Rajya Sabha seat. The DMK is considering the request. We want more seats than we contested in 2021," the source added.

The meeting between Venugopal and Stalin took place on the day the DMK formally launched seat-sharing negotiations with its alliance partners. The IUML was the first party to meet the DMK's seat-sharing committee, which asked the ally to accept fewer seats than in 2021 in the interest of the alliance.

Former Assam Congress chief joins BJP, warns of more exits

GUWAHATI, DHNS: A week after quitting Congress in poll-bound Assam, former president of Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC), Bhupen Kumar Borah, formally joined the BJP on Sunday with a warning that "many more would follow suit" as the high Congress command did not act on the issues raised by him in his resignation letter.

"I did not resign from Congress to join the BJP. When I submitted the resignation letter, I was expecting that the party would do serious introspection and correct the issues I raised. But when I spoke to Rahul Gandhi, the message I got was that I would have to tolerate the insult inside the party. Then I decided to leave," Borah said soon after Dilip Saikia, president of the BJP's Assam unit, formally handed over the BJP membership slip to him at Vajpayee Bhawan, the BJP's state headquarters.

Borah, a former two-time MLA, who had served as the president of APCC for nearly five years, between 2021 and May 2025, quit Congress on February 17 while complaining over the way the party was being run by the present Gaurav Gogoi, a Lok Sabha member and son of his former mentor, Tarun Gogoi.

Former Assam Congress president Bhupen Borah joins the saffron party in the presence of state BJP chief Dilip Saikia in Guwahati. PTI

In fact, after Himanta Biswa Sarma quit the BJP in 2015 after leading the dissidents, Tarun Gogoi publicly called Borah "my right-hand man." Borah and Rana Goswami, another Congress leader who similarly joined the BJP in February 2024, became former CM Tarun Gogoi's two "trusted lieutenants." Gogoi died in November 2020 due to Covid-related complications.

Borah was made the APCC chief in 2021 to steer the party after two consecutive defeats to the BJP. He, however, was replaced by Gaurav as APCC president in May 2025 after the Opposition party lost the bypolls for five Assembly constituencies. Borah was chairman of the party's campaign committee for the 2026 polls.

As polls near, Kerala govt's health record under fire

ARJUN RAGHUNATH
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS

During the 2021 Kerala Assembly elections, the ruling CPM-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) showcased its achievements in the health sector. Five years later, however, the government is struggling to defend itself against successive cases of medical negligence that have claimed lives and left children with permanent disabilities.

With public health a key concern for citizens, lapses in the sector have become a major talking point in the poll-bound state.

The state had earlier won national and international recognition under the first Pinarayi Vijayan government for containing Nipah outbreaks and keeping Covid-19 death rates low through early detection.

As health minister, KK Shailaja was widely praised for leading from the front during crises such as the Nipah outbreak in 2018, offering crucial moral support to doctors and health workers.

NEGLIGENCE

- In 2021 campaign, LDF showcased health achievements
- Five years later, medical negligence cases cast shadow
- In recent cases, forceps left inside patient for 5 yrs; child loses hand
- Health minister calls lapses isolated incidents

Achievements in the health sector became the highlight of the LDF's 2021 election campaign, sparking speculation that Shailaja could even emerge as the alliance's chief ministerial candidate. While that did not materialise, her popularity was unmistakable. She secured the highest victory margin in the state, winning Mattanur in Kannur by 60,963 votes in the 2021 Assembly elections.

Five years on, as Kerala heads into the next Assembly election, the scenario has almost turned topsy-turvy.

Beyond recurring cases of medical negligence, even senior doctors have spoken out. Dr Haris Chirakkal of Thiruvananthapuram Medical College — the state's premier public hospital — publicly flagged undue delays in the supply of essential medical equipment, warning that surgeries were being affected.

Health Minister Veena George and other CPM leaders have often downplayed serious lapses, describing them as "isolated incidents" or "system errors".

The latest case involved a forceps left inside a woman for five years after surgery at Alappuzha Medical College. More recently, a surgical guide wire was discovered inside a 26-year-old woman who had undergone thyroid surgery at Thiruvananthapuram Government General Hospital in 2023.

Even more tragic was the case of nine-year-old Vinodini from Palakkad district, who lost her right hand due to alleged medical lapses in the treatment of a fracture.

In 2023, a woman recovering from surgery at Kozhikode Medical College Hospital suffered sexual assault allegedly at the hands of a hospital staffer. Last year, a 56-year-old woman died after a building collapsed at Kottayam Medical College Hospital.

Health Minister Veena George, a journalist-turned-politician, has argued that lapses in government hospitals were isolated incidents exaggerated to benefit the private health sector.

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No.: HGM/RO/E-Auction/2025-26 Date: 21.02.2026

NOTIFICATION
INVITING BIDS FOR FIXED DEPOSITS

The Hutti Gold Mines Company Limited (HGML) intends to invest its Surplus Funds through e-Auction in the deposits with both Public Sector Banks including RRBs as under:

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The details of the e-Auction of this tender can be downloaded from the e-Portal of the Government of Karnataka at **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** on **23.02.2026.**

The Schedule of events for e-auction are as under

1) Uploading of bid documents in e-portal: **24.02.2026, 12.00 Noon.**
2) Last date to upload the declaration in Annexure-A in the e-portal: **03.03.2026 on or before 1.00 PM. 3)** Live bidding for interest rates: **05.03.2026 between 11.00 AM to 2.00 PM.**

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E-TENDER NOTIFICATION (CALL-3)
(Through e-Procurement portal)

Mysore Sales International Limited (A Government of Karnataka undertaking) invites E-Tender through e-Procurement platform **for Selection of Tenant for Leasing/Renting out Company's Properties at Plot No.306, Hebbal Industrial Area, Mysuru measuring about 17179 sq.ft.** The documents are available at e-Procurement website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** address **from 23.02.2026 to 05.03.2026 up to 3.30 p.m.** The pre bid meeting date: **26.02.2026 at 3.30 p.m.**

Sd/- Chief General Manager, Projects Division

KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(CIN: U40109KA1999SGC025521)

No:SEE/T(Projects)/MYS/EE(E)(O)/AEE-1/25-26/6456 Date:20.02.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal only)

KPTCL invites bids for the following goods.

Name of the Works: **1. Bid Enquiry No: KPTCL/SEE/PROJECTS/MYS/EEE(O)/AEE-1/2025-26/1 Date: 20/02/2026** for Supply, Installation, Configuration and Testing of Display system, Video conferencing system for conference setup, Supply & Installation of Associated furniture's for SE office, Transmission (Projects) Circle, KPTCL, Mysuru.

2. Bid Enquiry No: KPTCL/SEE/PROJECTS/MYS/EEE(O)/AEE-1/2025-26/2 Date: 20/02/2026 for Supply, Installation, Configuration and Testing of Desktop Computers, Laptop Computers & Line interactive UPS for Various offices coming under Transmission (Projects) Circle, KPTCL, Mysuru.

3. Bid Enquiry No: KPTCL/SEE/PROJECTS/MYS/EEE(O)/AEE-1/2025-26/3 Date: 20/02/2026 for Supply, Installation, Configuration and Testing of Photocopier & Multifunction printer for Various offices coming under Transmission (Projects) Circle, KPTCL, Mysuru.

The bids will be received through electronic mode only. The details notification regarding above said enquiry can be obtained by logging on to KPTCL website: https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in with hyper link 'E Procurement KPTCL' OR https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in on or after **27.02.2026 @ 17:00 Hrs".**

Any details required in this regard can also be had from the office of the undersigned during office hours. All corrigendum/Addendums shall be noticed by the bidders before the last date of submission of the bids.

Sd/- Superintending Engineer, (Elec.,)
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Government of Karnataka
Finance Department,
Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru
No.: FD 25 JS(B&R) 2025 Date: 18.02.2026

KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT STOCK (SECURITIES)

1. **Aggregate Amount : Total Rs. 9,000 Crore**
   1. **Rs. 2,000 Crore 8-Year Tenure.**
   2. **Rs. 2,000 Crore 8-Year 6-Month Tenure.**
   3. **Rs. 2,000 Crore 10-Year Tenure.**
   4. **Rs. 2,000 Crore 10-Year 6-Month Tenure.**
   5. **Rs. 1,000 Crore - Re-issue of 7.25% SGS 2033;**
2. **Method of Issue: By auction, through PDO, RBI, Mumbai (Fort)**
3. **Date of auction : February 24, 2026**

Government of Karnataka invites subscription to the above securities. Copies of the Notification and Application forms may be obtained from PDO, RBI, Bengaluru. Non-competitive bidding facility has been introduced by RBI to encourage participation of retail investors. The Government stock up to 10% of the notified amount of the sale will be allotted to eligible individuals and institutions. Sample Tender Forms and the revised scheme of Non-competitive bidding facility is available on the website **www.rbi.org.in**

Sd/- Joint Secretary to Government
(Budget & Resources)
Finance Department.

DIPR/DD-C.P/5740/KSMCA/2025-26

DECCAN HERALD
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Work harder on fiscal federalism

The 16th Finance Commission, whose report was tabled in Parliament, is trying to accept a new fiscal reality and shape its recommendations accordingly. The Finance Commission is a Constitutional mechanism that periodically resets fiscal relations between the Centre and states, and among the states. Headed by Arvind Panagariya, it has been receptive to suggestions and demands. The concerns of states, especially the economically better-performing ones, remain, though the Commission has made an attempt to address them in some ways. It has retained the states' share in the divisible pool of Central taxes at 41% against a demand to raise it to 50%. But it has changed the criteria and weights used to apportion the devolved quantum of taxes among states. This has led to an increase in the share of southern states from 15.8% under the 15th Finance Commission to 17% now. But it is pointed out that they once enjoyed a 21% share.

Some changes in the criteria for devolution have drawn attention. The increase in the weightage of the 'contribution to GDP' measure from 2.5% earlier to 10% now would reward states achieving better growth outcomes. At the same time, the weightage for demographic performance has been reduced from 12.5% to 10%. While the Commission's recommendations are considered an attempt to balance various imperatives such as growth and equity, states that felt punished for good governance and economic performance are not entirely happy. The Karnataka government has claimed that the state would lose Rs 10,000 crore to Rs 15,000 crore annually. Tamil Nadu has called the recommendations a disappointment.

Finance Commission heeds states' concerns, but is it doing enough to address them?

Though the states' share in the divisible pool remains at 41%, their actual share in total Central tax collections is materially lower. This is because the Centre has increasingly levied cesses and surcharges outside the divisible pool; consequently, collections are not shared with the states. The decision to abolish revenue deficit grants (RDGs) and state- or sector-specific grants will also work against states whose resources have shrunk due to the introduction of GST. A significant portion of the increase in transfers from the Centre to the states comes from revenue transfers under Centrally Sponsored Schemes, which the Centre controls. Although the Commission's recommendations seem to recognise problems faced by the states, they have not substantially promoted fiscal federalism

Don't delay food labelling mandate

The proposal to introduce mandatory front-of-package warning labels on packaged food products high in sugar, salt and saturated fat has been debated for many years. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), which should decide on the matter, had previously given the impression that it would act soon. It had engaged the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad to prepare a report on it. It had said that the system would promote healthy eating habits and reduce the burden of non-communicable diseases. Reports said the FSSAI had decided on a scheme for voluntary implementation of the labelling plan starting in 2023, with mandatory labelling after four years. This scheme involved a star rating system that included a colour scheme, a nutrition score, and warning messages. According to this, packaged foods would be rated on a scale of 0.5 to 5 based on a composite score.

Last year, the Supreme Court directed an expert committee to submit its recommendations on the rule changes required to implement front-of-package labelling. In a recent affidavit filed in court, the FSSAI said it intended to conduct further research and undertake a systematic mapping of different varieties of packaged food products. It proposed conducting consumer surveys to assess how label information is used, reviewing global trends in front-of-pack nutrition labelling, and holding wider consultations with large industry bodies and micro, small and medium enterprises. A bench of Justice A B Pardiwala and K V Viswanathan expressed dissatisfaction over the FSSAI's position, remarking that the organisation "should not be concerned about multinational companies but about the right to health of citizens of the country." The court told the FSSAI to file its response within four weeks. It issued these directions while hearing petitions seeking mandatory front-of-package warning labelling for all packaged food items. The petitioners also opposed the star rating system proposal on the grounds that it does not clearly warn consumers about excessive levels of sugar, salt and saturated fats.

FSSAI shouldn't dilly-dally on front-of-package warnings

Availability of information about packaged food ingredients is important as non-communicable ailments and lifestyle diseases are spreading in the country. India is the world capital of diabetes with over 11% of its population suffering from it. The incidence of ailments related to hypertension, obesity and cholesterol is high. Consumers need guidance and warnings about the contents of packaged food, especially ultra-processed food and additives, to make informed and healthy choices. Such information should be detailed, specific, and exhaustive, and in conformity with global standards. The FSSAI is responsible for developing and implementing a scheme for that.

CITIZENSHIP IN LIMBO

Still refugees, after 30 years

Chief Minister M K Stalin seeks Indian citizenship for an estimated 89,000 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees residing in Tamil Nadu. Will the Centre oblige?

M R NARAYAN SWAMY

Palaniandi Nagenthiran has completed 15 years since returning to Sri Lanka for good after living for over two decades in India as a Tamil refugee. But he still misses Tamil Nadu.

Now running a business, Nagenthiran, 48, leads a busy life at Mankulam, a small town 93 kilometres south of Jaffna. "I am happy. I am no more a refugee," he said over the telephone. "Living in a camp was not easy. But when I think of the educational opportunities, medical facilities and recreation there, I long for Tamil Nadu."

In Chennai, R Pathmanathan, one of the large numbers of Sri Lankan Tamils at a refugee camp adjoining the Central Jail, is all set to return to Mullaitivu in Sri Lanka. Like Nagenthiran, he, too, sailed to Tamil Nadu as a teenager with his parents in 1990, shortly after heavy fighting resumed between the military and the Tamil Tigers after the Indian Army withdrew from the war theatre.

"I have lived for 36 years in Tamil Nadu. I am now 51," he said. "My parents are in Mullaitivu, we have a house there. So, I want to go back to Sri Lanka. If all goes well, I will fly out of India next week."

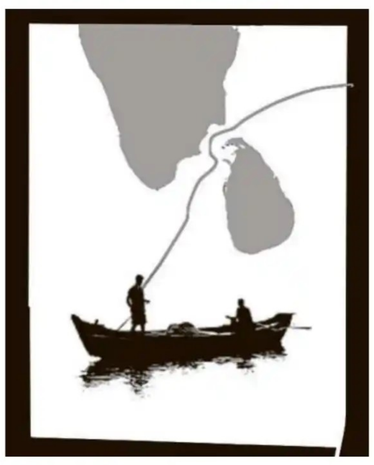
Both Nagenthiran and Pathmanathan admit they represent a minority among the estimated 89,000 Tamil refugees in Tamil Nadu, as most of them are reluctant to return to Sri Lanka for more reasons than one.

The unsettled status of the refugees has come into focus after Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 15 to grant them Indian citizenship or suitable long-term visas. Citing humanitarian reasons, Stalin pointed out that many refugees have spent around 30 years in India amid legal uncertainties and almost 40% have been born in Tamil Nadu.

Boatloads of Tamils began fleeing Sri Lanka to Tamil Nadu after vicious anti-Tamil riots swept Colombo in 1983, following the killing of 13 soldiers in Jaffna by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). A second wave of refugees flocked to India by the sea in the wake of fresh fighting in the island nation in 1990.

Over the years, many refugees migrated from India to Western countries, giving rise to a powerful and affluent Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. But the ones with the least resources were constrained to remain in Tamil Nadu in more than 100 camps.

"More than 80% of our people do not want to return to Sri Lanka," Pathmanathan said. According to him, most would be happy to stay on in India if they get citizenship. Some aim to join their relatives in the West.



Stalin's appeal to Modi sparked an immediate reaction in Sri Lanka, where one opposition leader called for a return of all the refugees. But President Anura Dissanayake's government does not seem eager to welcome them back.

The leader of an NGO, which works with the refugees, says it is high time a permanent solution was found for them. "How long can a people live in limbo?" asked Chandrahasan Ilangovan, also a leader of the Federal Party of Sri Lanka who commutes between Jaffna and Chennai.

Successive Tamil Nadu governments with the backing of the central government have provided every month Rs 1,500 to heads of refugee families. Other adult members get Rs 750 and children under 12 Rs 400. Since this money cannot go far, the refugees are allowed to take up work outside the camps. While a section has attained reasonable education and holds white collar jobs, many – including those with diploma level studies – do odd jobs for a living.

"We are grateful to India for doing so much, but life as refugees is difficult," said Nataraja Saravanan, 46, who sailed to Tamil Nadu as a nine-year-old. "Officials keep checking our IDs. It adds to our problems because we need to be in the camps when this happens."

Stalin wants New Delhi to axe earlier administrative instructions that barred consideration of citizenship applications and to clarify that refugees sheltered in India up to January 9, 2015 would not be treated as "illegal migrants".

Shanthan K Thambiah, a Tamil political commentator based out of London, underlined that Sri Lankan Tamils in Europe and North America earned their citizenship within roughly 10 years. "It is not fair that so many are without citizenship even after being in India for three decades," he said. "I am sure Tamils will prove to be assets if they become Indians. Today, the Tamils' contribution to the larger society is acknowledged in the UK, Canada and Australia."

Sri Lankans say that many second-generation Tamil refugees born and raised in India have developed social, cultural and economic roots in Tamil Nadu. For them, Sri Lanka is not a lived homeland but an inherited property shaped by their parents' displacement. India is the only country they know although life in the refugee camps can be harsh.

"Granting Indian citizenship would offer dignity, legal certainty and long-term stability to those who have already built their lives in India," said Aruliniyan Mahalingam, who edits the popular monthly, Jaffna Monitor.

Indian officials say the citizenship law does not favour Tamil refugees, but the circumstances could change. Also, authorities remain wary of the persisting influence of the LTTE ideology in some refugees, more so as sections of Tamil Nadu politicians continue to glorify the vanquished rebels.

Some Sri Lankan Tamil leaders, however, feel the mass return of the refugees from India would add to the strength of the community in Sri Lanka where the Tamil population has fallen steeply due to unending migration, leading to the greater political marginalisation of the long-suffering Tamil minority.

(The writer is a long-time observer of Sri Lanka and the author of four books on the ethnic conflict)

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

Melting calories and guilt

Food is a language of love, togetherness, and the simple joy of living

APARNA SREEVATSA

Is your food your friend or foe? I had become almost paranoid about what I was eating, scrolling through reel after reel of Instagram influencers who spoke with a confidence that sometimes rivalled doctors. Rice was "poison". Fruits were suspect. Protein supplement marketers seemed determined to push their products down my throat. The touted benefits of nuts made me go nuts. And I went bananas when a relative warned me that even bananas were dangerous.

I was trying to practise *Hara Hachi Bu* — the art of stopping when your stomach is 80% full. But I could never quite decipher the rumbles in my belly: was it half full or half empty? More often than I liked, I overshot from 80% to 100... sometimes even 120%, only to be left feeling quietly guilty afterwards.

Amid this swirl of hunger, frustration, incompetence and guilt, I decided — just for a day — to violate the rules of the balanced diet. I did not want to eat in fear or in guilt. I wanted to eat not by calculating the calorie quotient but by honouring the fun quotient. I did not want to count grams of protein; I wanted to celebrate the food itself. I wanted to savour it unapologetically — at least for that one day. The rest of the week, after all, I had already signed up for oats, boiled vegetables and protein shakes.

Remembering my late father, who would jubilantly show us how to cook and always relished his food, I began chopping onions and scraping coconut. Rice flour too went in. Soon the dough was ready. I patted the dough it right onto the *banale* (wok) and poured spoonfuls of oil. Within minutes, the kitchen filled with the irresistible aroma of onions. The coconut *chutney* was ready in a jiffy. Just then, the kids gathered around me, loudly expressing their disdain for *roti* and demanding to know why we couldn't simply order pizza.

That did not dampen my enthusiasm. Thankfully, the *roti* came off the wok in a perfect single piece, without any drama. I placed a generous cube of butter on top. It melted slowly and slid across the hot *roti* — and the children were instantly enchanted. Soon they wanted to taste it too. Bite after bite, they nodded in approval, finally awarding me a five-star rating. I savoured the hot *roti* with *chutney*, followed by a cup of filter coffee.

In that moment, I realised the point of food was never just proteins, fibre or calories. Food is neither friend nor foe. It is a language of love, togetherness, and the simple joy of living.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Follow up regularly to deliver on road repair promises

Apropos 'All road works to be completed before monsoon, says Dy CM Shivakumar' (Feb 22), it is gratifying to hear that all road works will be completed before the monsoon. However, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and the civic agencies involved must rise to the occasion to meet the deadline. Delays often occur, and the Deputy Chief Minister, as the minister in charge of Bengaluru, should coordinate with the agencies executing the contracts to ensure efficiency and adherence to timelines. The residents of Bengaluru are eagerly awaiting the completion of these projects, which have been plagued by delays and disruptions. The upcoming monsoon season poses a significant challenge, and it is crucial that the roads are repaired and ready to withstand the heavy rains. Any further delays will not only cause inconvenience but also pose safety risks to commuters. The government must ensure transparency and accountability. Additionally, measures should be taken to minimise disruptions to traffic and daily life during the construction process.
C V Aravind, Bengaluru

Questionable tactics

Apropos 'Defamation case: Rahul appears in UP Court' (Feb 21), the case raises questions about *locus standi* and territorial jurisdiction. The complainant, Vijay Mishra, is a total stranger to the case, and the alleged remarks were made against Amit Shah, not the petitioner.
The case lacks merit, as the cause of action arose in Karnataka, not Lucknow. It is concerning that defamation cases are often filed against Rahul Gandhi in BJP-ruled states.
Prabhu Harle, Bengaluru

Conserve lakes

Bengaluru's deteriorating lake water quality reflects years of unplanned urban growth and weak enforcement. Coordinated restoration, sewage control, and transparent monitoring are essential to prevent ecological assets from becoming public health hazards, undermining sustainability and citizens' trust in governance.
Kirthana Sastry, Bengaluru

Fix urban sanitation

I refer to 'Bellahalli highlights urban sanitation failures' (Feb 20). The editorial highlights Bengaluru's persistent waste management crisis, revealing the city's failure to implement long-overdue reforms. Overflowing garbage, blocked drains, and poor segregation reflect systemic inefficiencies and lack of accountability. Despite repeated warnings, civic agencies and citizens have failed to coordinate effectively, exacerbating public health risks. Immediate steps, such as strict enforcement of waste rules and modernised collection systems, are essential. Bellahalli serves as a stark reminder that sustainable urban sanitation demands proactive planning and consistent action.
Arya Binnu, Bengaluru

Restore footpaths

Footpaths in Bengaluru do not serve pedestrians due to encroachments, broken pavements, and parked vehicles. This neglect endangers lives and excludes the elderly and disabled. Walkable streets deserve urgent civic priority.
Jiya Kumari, Bengaluru

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: **letters@deccanherald.co.in** (only letters emailed – not handwritten – will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT

Dharm is Sanatan, Hindu is an identity. 'Hindu' is not mentioned in Vedas or Upanishads...People across Sindhu were called Hindus. So Hindu is an identity, the religion is Sanatan.
Digvijaya Singh, Congress leader

People are very open-minded about new things - as long as they're exactly like the old ones.
Charles Kettering

TO BE PRECISE

IN PERSPECTIVE

Oiling the wheels of India-US trade

Pressure from the US is reshaping India's energy map

RANJAN MATHAI

Excitement over the interim India-United States trade deal announced a fortnight ago has given way to intense, sometimes bitter, debates on what exactly has been agreed, and at what price, particularly with respect to agriculture and energy. It comes as a relief that the White House now says India's agreement to purchase energy (among other products) worth $500 billion from the US in the next five years, is an intention rather than a definitive commitment.

However, US President Donald Trump's claims that India would stop buying Russian oil, and that he and Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed that India would buy more oil from the US, and potentially Venezuela, raised difficult questions about our capacity for foreign policy manoeuvre. Then what raised hackles was the separate executive order in which Trump asserted that the US will 'monitor' India's oil imports, and could reimpose 25% tariffs on Indian exports, if purchases from Russia 'are resumed directly or indirectly'!

Our ministers and senior officials, when questioned, have resorted to generalisations about strategic autonomy, diversifying oil import sources, etc, and passing the buck on import decisions to the companies involved. Such mantras may or may not prevail in domestic political discourse, but global analysts assess that India was forced to accept very tough US terms — including oil purchase commitments, to secure its exports to the US. Whether there could be a trade-off in securing US support for India's strategic foreign policy interests still remains to be seen

Russia became a major oil supplier to India from 2022 onwards, largely because of heavy discounts, which have now reduced significantly. Nevertheless, evidence of pressure on India to shift away from Russian supplies has been visible for some months. In December 2025, traders noted that imports from Russia fell to 1.38 million barrels per day (mbpd) — the lowest since 2023 — down from a peak of close to 2 mbpd, nearly 40% of India's oil imports.

Reuters has quoted sources as saying Russian oil imports would be below 1 mbpd by March. Meanwhile, oil imports from the US rose sharply in 2025, reaching 570,000 bpd by the end of the year — doubling the US' share to about 12% of India's oil imports. A clear 'diversification' of supply sources was underway!

A January 2 Reuters report noted that the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas had asked refiners to provide weekly data on imports from Russia and the US, stating that the information was required by the Prime Minister's Office. Oil sourcing decisions, as our top officials say, are guided by national interests and hence perhaps 'monitored'. India curtailed imports from Venezuela due to US sanctions, but companies have resumed buying with US approval. Iran, once one of our principal suppliers, remains off limits under US pressure.

India is now the world's second-largest net oil importer, absorbing over 10% of global exports. That should give us market power in the global oil market, which is well supplied. But oil trade is becoming more geopolitical than commercial as Trump has made restoration of 'US energy dominance' into a key goal of US policy. The National Security Strategy announced in November 2025 explicitly calls for expanding US energy exports, to project power, and curtail the influence of adversaries.

China has continued buying Russian oil, and will now be Russia's largest customer. Analysts estimate that seaborne exports from Russia to China touched record highs in January. With Russia and China already finalising a massive increase in pipeline gas trade, a potentially critical Eurasian energy alliance may be in the making.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to India in December 2025 went off well despite reports of declining oil purchases, and attention was focused on defence ties. The Russians would have since observed that Indian companies have started buying Venezuelan crude, despite political concerns over the legitimacy of US intervention in Caracas. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov recently commented bitterly on the US using sanctions to pressure nations into abandoning Russian energy resources in favour of more expensive US supplies. Creative initiatives from Indian policymakers will be needed to preserve the strategic relationship with Russia.

Venezuela's heavy crudes suit our refineries, so buying from that country can be explained on commercial considerations. Indian diplomacy should now leverage our working with the dispensation in Caracas to repatriate the $580 million in dividends owed to ONGC Videsh, still blocked by sanctions. This sum could increase ONGC's domestic exploration budget by 50%, and help reverse the decade-long downward slide in domestic production.

Having access to imports from Venezuela would also become particularly useful if the tensions between the US and Iran end in a war — which would choke off supplies from the Gulf. Dependence on imports for 87% of our oil requirements is a source of insecurity. Oil still runs the wheels of our economy, and if it lubricates our trade deals, that should be no surprise.

(The writer is former Foreign Secretary of India and High Commissioner to the United Kingdom)

Orange future: How micro-influencers are redefining the creative economy

SHIKHA KARAMCHANDANI

The Union Budget 2026 placed significant emphasis on the Orange Economy. To understand this paradigm shift in policy, it is important to clarify what the term encompasses. The Orange Economy includes creative industries such as media, fashion, digital content, culture, and design, along with AVGC—animation, visual effects, gaming, and comics. The focus signals a change in how India intends to value creativity in the years ahead.

The business ecosystem is increasingly being driven by creativity. Brands are investing in newer forms of marketing rather than relying solely on traditional ways. Influencer marketing, in particular, has attracted considerable attention from brands. According to data from EY and Collective Artists Network, influencer marketing in India is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 18% to reach Rs 3,375 crore by the end of this year. Between 2 and 2.5 million commercialised content creators—independent digital creators with more than 1,000 followers who consistently produce digital content—are currently active in the country. India is among the world's fastest-growing creative marketplaces, with the broader creator economy expanding at 22% annually.

A recent empirical study conducted among Indian Gen Z Instagram users examined how micro-influencers shape consumer behaviour (*Karamchandani et al.*, 2025). Micro-influencers are those with relatively small but niche followings. The findings challenge popular assumptions that expertise or celebrity status automatically leads to higher purchase intention. An interesting finding is evident from the study: that image satisfaction, rather than advertising trust alone, drives consumers toward purchase decisions.

The Orange Economy is built on cultural connection, identity, and ideas. The value these influencers bring is from consistent audience engagement that results in a deeper social connection. Micro-influencers occupy a unique position as informal brand ambassadors with a critical role on social media platforms. And unlike celebrities and famous personalities, micro-influencers are relatable, often sharing their own personal narratives alongside brand content.

The study, based on responses from almost 300 Indian Instagram users, found that originality in communication significantly enhances image satisfaction, which in turn has an effect on the intention to purchase. And that consumers' trust in the advertised content does not directly translate into purchase intention. This means that a deluge of commercial messages does not directly connect and relate to the audience. A lesson brands have learnt, and they have signed on micro-influencers to overcome this. New and lesser-known creators often outperform seasoned celebrities in influencing consumption trends. Micro-influencers often use storytelling to create an emotional appeal that audiences strongly relate to, as it is much closer to the viewer's own self, lifestyles, and everyday realities. Audiences often perceive micro-influencers as "everyday people" who present themselves without excessive glamour, luxury, or highly stylised content. The originality these influencers bring makes the messages feel more genuine and plays an important role in building trust. This perceived authenticity ensures greater trust among viewers.

The regional content created by micro-influencers from Tier II and Tier III cities is gaining significant traction. Of India's 958 million active Internet users, 57% are rural. And nearly 98% of these Internet users in the country accessed content in regional languages, with Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam emerging as the most popular due to their extensive availability, according to an IAMAI report. Vernacular content resonates because of its cultural relevance.

For companies, the ultimate objective is to sell. Creative, distinctive and authentic micro-influencer content enables brands to achieve this more effectively than traditional advertising. These developments show how crucial the Orange Economy has become to patterns of consumption. It is no longer peripheral to mainstream economic activity. Companies cannot afford to overlook this.

Influencers are powerful in their communication, giving the audience a genuine and engaging brand experience. Their convincing, creative tactics appear less like a marketing effort from yet another brand but more like real content from another consumer. Collaborating with micro-influencers enables brands to establish a connection with their target market most effectively. The crucial role micro-influencers play in marketing today elevates these content creators from being mere hobbyists to key economic drivers.

The government, too, appears to be recognising this rapid transformation. If the objective is to institutionalise the Orange Economy, policy must move beyond symbolic celebration and towards sustained support for creators. The central government has plans to implement some of the policies that move beyond just celebrating creativity but instead provide sustenance to the creators.

The central government announced a $1 billion fund to boost the creator economy. Prasar Bharati's initiative aims to integrate micro-influencers into public service broadcasting through "Creator's Corner". This initiative not only provides national exposure but also provides aid in the protection of creators' intellectual property (IP). The 2026 Union Budget indicates a shift from treating creators as a novelty to viewing them as essential economic infrastructure. The aim is to nurture a sustainable "Orange Economy" in the long run through upskilling the youth into certified content creators. That day is not far off when India will be positioned as a global creative economy. The Orange Economy is no longer an emerging trend—it is India's next competitive advantage. The question is not whether creators will shape the economy, but whether institutions will evolve fast enough to support them.

(The writer is an assistant professor and programme director at RV University, Bengaluru)

Tech leaders are beginning to worry about the public's underwhelming enthusiasm for their plans to remake the world with artificial intelligence. Will that burst the bubble?

DAVID STREITFELD

An aerial view of Meta's new data centre under construction in Los Angeles. Massive data centres are being built around the country. THE NEW YORK TIMES

Tech leaders are all in on AI. The public, not so much

Silicon Valley executives promise that artificial intelligence is going to radically change everyone's life for the better, starting just a few minutes from now. AI is described as the new electricity. It's even bigger than fire. Don't bother saving money for retirement because everyone will be rich rich rich.

Your grandparents heard pretty much the same thing. The creators of a new technology have always sold it as producing a fundamental transformation of human existence. The radio was touted as bringing "perpetual peace on earth." Television was supposed to arouse so much empathy for different cultures that it would end war. Cable television would educate the masses and lead to widespread enlightenment.

This time, though, the masses have not been won over.

In a You.gov survey last year, more than a third of respondents said they were concerned that AI would end human life on Earth. Even those with a more hopeful attitude overwhelmingly said in another poll that they would not pay extra to put AI on their devices. And in the most recent large survey conducted by the National Bureau of Economic Research, 80% of firms reported that AI was having no impact on their productivity or employment.

The chief salesperson of the AI boom, Sam Altman of OpenAI, said there was more resistance to "the diffusion, the absorption" of AI into the culture and economy than he expected.

"Looking at what's possible, it does feel sort of surprisingly slow," Altman said at an AI conference this month.

Jensen Huang, CEO of chipmaker Nvidia, is worried. The tech industry hype may seem omnipresent, but Huang feels "the battle of narratives" is being won by the critics.

"It's extremely hurtful, frankly," Huang said in a podcast interview last month. "A lot of damage" has been done by "very well-respected people who have painted a doomer narrative, end-of-the-world narrative, science fiction narrative."

In Huang's view, the critics want regulations that will hamper the AI industry and slow it down. Meanwhile, the sceptics are "scaring people from making the investments in AI" that would make it better.

Nvidia, which makes the chips that power AI data centres, does not lack investors. It is now the most highly valued company in the world, with a market capitalisation of $4.5 trillion. Google, Microsoft, Amazon and Meta have also seen their values soar. Some AI startups have become fantastically valuable practically overnight in a way never quite seen before, starting with OpenAI.

Huang is nevertheless correct. Adoption has plateaued. In the fourth quarter of 2025, 38% of employees told Gallup that their workplace had integrated AI technology. That number was essentially unchanged from the third quarter.

AI is clearly not technology that is being universally encouraged as inevitable. Corporations often report that, so far, it does not seem to do much. But fears are everywhere. The S&P North American software index fell 15% in January, its biggest monthly decline in 17 years, on fears that AI would replace software.

"I can't really remember a boom with such active hostility to it," said William Quinn, co-author of "Boom and Bust: A Global History of Financial Bubbles." "People usually find new technology exciting. It happened with electricity, bicycles, motorcars. There were fears but also hopes. AI is notable, perhaps unique, for the lack of enthusiasm."

The indifference and hostility to AI were probably inevitable. AI's champions describe an unsettling future where humans who use the technology will replace those who don't.

Perhaps this is why AI regulation is one of the few issues that a divided America seems united on: According to a Gallup survey last spring, 80% of Americans want rules for AI even if that means the technology develops more slowly. It's not just low-skill workers who are wary. Each year Edelman, the global communications firm, surveys trust in society. In its latest report, released in January, two-thirds of low-income US respondents said that "people like me will be left behind rather than realise any real advantages from generative AI." Perhaps more remarkably, nearly half the high-income workers felt the same way.

For all the familiarity of its promises to change the world, some things about the AI boom are different—and are holding it back from the warm embrace of the public.

Past booms like the 1849 California gold rush or the dot-com bubble offered at least the illusion of public participation. You, too, could go to California and try your luck.

Starting an AI company, on the other hand, requires expertise and serious funding. For most people, AI is instead something imposed on them, starting with their email and web browser.

Another problem is that the biggest boosters of AI have a tendency to come out with very dark comments, sometimes without seeming to realise it. Talk-show host Jimmy Fallon last winter somewhat plaintively asked Bill Gates, the Microsoft co-founder, "Will we still need humans?"

Gates replied: "Not for most things."

This month, Mrinank Sharma, the leader of the safeguards research team at Anthropic, cryptically posted on social media that he felt pressured "to set aside what matters most." The world, he said, "is in peril" and while the problems were "not just from AI," he was quitting to write poetry.

The "doomer narratives," as Huang of Nvidia would call them, are coming from inside the AI house.

The tech executives who are betting their companies' futures on the triumph of AI have many resources to make sure it happens. They can spend even more money to build even more data centres. On the other hand, data centres around the country are increasingly a target of opposition for local residents who dislike the noise, the disruption, the secrecy and the lack of community benefits like jobs.

Satya Nadella, the CEO of Microsoft, recognises the risks here. He believes that "the real question" is when AI will be perceived as helping people.

People admire AI as a newfangled tech tool that can perhaps do amazing things, he suggested at the Davos economics forum last month. But they don't necessarily see a positive effect in their own lives.

"I think we, even as a global community, have to get to a point where we're using this to do something useful that changes the outcomes of people and communities and countries," Nadella said.

Without that, he warned, the technology will lose "social permission" to, for example, use as much energy as it does—a thirst pushing up the price of electricity for US households.

The AI companies seem increasingly alert to a perception problem. This year's Super Bowl featured AI-themed ads that were defensive or just odd. Amazon's ad showed AI proposing ways to kill Chris Hemsworth. The twist at the end: AI disarms him with a promised massage.

In Thrall to Devices

Anxiety over technology has been building for a long time. What is new with AI is that the fears are so vague yet so comprehensive that they are breaching the walls of Silicon Valley itself.

In a 2024 survey of registered voters in the Bay Area, three-quarters said the leading tech companies had too much power and influence.

Robert Thomas, a retired Bay Area psychologist, is one of the disaffected. "At first we greatly anticipated the electronic conveniences created by cybergeniuses — the personal computer, the internet, the iPad, the iPod, etc.," he said. "However, since then things feel out of control. More and more, my life is partly controlled by some electronic device. Even worse, "I barely relate to people anymore."

From the point of view of the AI promoters, an inability to relate to human beings is not a defect but a virtue. "I suspect that in a couple of years on almost any topic, the most interesting, maybe the most empathetic conversation that you could have will be with an AI," Altman said on a podcast.

No wonder Thomas, who is 78, often feels frustrated. He fantasises about punching a young tech worker in face. And yet. He had ChatGPT write a speech for his wife's birthday. It was beautiful and eloquent.

All of which means the future of AI could probably go either way.

The New York Times

The currency of a good life

SREEKANTH YAGNAMURTHY

Is education meant to secure employment, or is it meant to help us lead a good life? This enduring question has accompanied human civilisation across centuries. At first glance, employment appears to be the pathway to a good life. Yet the two are not always identical and, at times, may even seem opposed. While most of adult life is spent working, childhood and adolescence are largely devoted to preparing for that work. Culturally and socially, employment is often valued only when it promises the most gainful opportunities, a phrase that, in practice, largely translates into earning more money. Although employment and money appear inseparable, the dissatisfaction many experience from long working hours suggests a deeper tension. They seem united in purpose but divided in spirit. Employment, money, and the idea of a good life often appear bundled together, yet they reside separately, each influencing the other without fully merging.

There is little dispute about the importance of employment or the role of money in modern life. However, defining what constitutes a "good life" remains both a philosophical inquiry and a deeply personal reflection. The Socratic observation that "an unexamined life is not worth living" challenges individuals to reflect on what truly matters. Across philosophical traditions, answers have varied. Hindu thought speaks of *dharma* (ethical duty) and *moksha* (liberation). Buddhism emphasises the overcoming of *dukkha* (suffering). Daoism encourages harmony with the natural order of the universe, while Stoicism upholds virtue as the highest good. At the opposite end lies hedonism, which regards pleasure and indulgence as life's ultimate aim. The former traditions suggest that a good life need not be centred on sensual gratification; the latter hold that sensory pleasure is the ultimate reality.

When money becomes the central focus, it can subtly encourage a hedonistic orientation, diverting attention from other vital dimensions of life, understanding oneself, nurturing meaningful relationships, and contributing to the larger community. Societies across cultures have long cherished these qualities as their highest ideals. Even at the individual level, people who embody empathy, integrity and social responsibility are admired. The concern, therefore, is not that money lacks importance. Rather, it is the growing tendency to treat money as the only important thing, as the measure that dictates and defines all other aspects of life. In such a framework, other virtues do not merely become secondary; they risk becoming subordinate. Money itself is not inherently harmful, and in moderate measure, it is essential for stability and dignity. Yet its pursuit can become limitless unless individuals consciously decide to set boundaries.

The philosopher Immanuel Kant warned against treating human beings merely as means to an end. His ethical principle insists that people must be respected as ends in themselves, possessing the freedom and dignity to make their own choices. Applying this insight, money should remain a means, while human relationships must remain ends. When money is elevated beyond its rightful place, the temptation to compromise this moral principle becomes real. The growing number of disputes in families, civil courts and criminal proceedings reflects not only legal disagreements but also the erosion of trust and understanding. Financial disputes frequently lie at the heart of such conflicts. Even more troubling are the countless tensions that never reach a courtroom, disputes that simmer silently within households, causing psychological strain without hope of resolution or justice.

This tension extends into education. A generation of students repeatedly told that success equals employability, and employability equals income, may gradually lose sight of the value of relationships and ethical commitments. A society that judges young people primarily by how "market-ready" they are or how much they are likely to earn narrows its understanding of human flourishing. Such an approach risks denying children the space to form their own conception of what constitutes a meaningful life. The trajectory of a child's future is profoundly shaped by early schooling and the pathways made available for higher education. While socio-economic background undeniably shapes aspirations and anxieties about money, the expanding range of professional opportunities today also offers room for choice. A good life becomes more attainable when passion guides decisions rather than compulsion.

The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence adds a new dimension to this debate. As automation reshapes industries and employment patterns, financial security may become increasingly uncertain for many. It is only through a humanistic approach, one that prioritises dignity, empathy and respect in relationships, that society can navigate this transformation with resilience.

(The writer is a professor at the National Council of Educational Research and Training)

OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 YEARS AGO: FEBRUARY 1976

India must build democracy of its own design: PM

Bombay, February 22
Prime Minister Indira Gandhi called upon the nation today to build a "democracy of our own design" without outside influence. Inaugurating a convention on "disciplined democracy" sponsored by the Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee at the Shanmukhananda Hall here, Mrs. Gandhi made a categorical declaration that India had not abandoned her adherence to democracy and she was not going to abandon it either.

25 YEARS AGO: FEBRUARY 2001

Govt orders judicial probe into attack on Chennamma

Bangalore, Feb 22
The State Government today ordered a judicial inquiry into the acid attack on former prime minister HD Deve Gowda's wife Chennamma, and his daughter-in- law Bhavani. The government also referred the incident to the Corps of Detectives. What is intriguing the administration is that two security officers from the SPG armed with pistols and automatic weapons were on either side of Ms Chennamma when the attack took place.

OASIS | ADITI PANT

The future is what you do today

We are, almost always, chasing a milestone and while we wait for our envisioned life to begin, our actual life interrupts: a family crisis, a health scare, an unexpected responsibility. We see these moments as obstacles to our "real" path. But what if they are the path? Real life unfolds in the margins of our plans; as detours, emergencies, and sacrifices.

Tetsugen, a Zen devotee in Japan, set out to collect donations and publish the Buddhist *sutras*. After ten years, when he finally had enough money to begin, the Uji river flooded. Famine followed. Tetsugen gave away all the funds he had raised to feed the hungry and started over. Years later, an epidemic swept the country. Again, he gave away everything he had collected. He began fundraising for the third time and finally after 20 years he completed the printing. From a narrow perspective, these interruptions delayed his purpose as he repeatedly surrendered his progress. But from a deeper perspective, those interruptions were the real work. The Japanese say Tetsugen produced three editions of the *sutras*, and that the first two invisible ones surpassed the third. The visible achievements are in a monastery. The invisible ones live in the lives he saved.

Recently, we experienced a less consequential scenario. My husband and I left our daughter at the bus stop and came back to get ready for our jobs, meetings, calls and other demands of the day. It so happened that my daughter sat on the wrong bus and even though we were frustrated, my husband had to pick her up and drop her to college. During this hour-long drive they talked about some challenges she was facing and he was able to impart suggestions and advice on how best to overcome them. This conversation, albeit a tough one, was much needed, perhaps more than his presence in the meeting he had to attend.

We may think we are building something for the future. Yet the truest measure of our lives may be found in the moments when we pause our plans of the future to respond to what is urgently human. Sometimes the most important chapters we write are the ones no one sees. And sometimes, the invisible work is the work that matters most as it is felt, abided and not just seen.

In dry Gujarat, villagers build 'cage of shame' to lock up drunkards

Panchha village has installed a cage to lock up drunkards before handing them over to police.

Community-funded 'remedy' aims to curb liquor menace

SATISH JHA
AHMEDABAD, DHNS

In 'dry' Gujarat, the liquor menace has prompted villages to adopt unusual measures to curb its spread. One village in north Gujarat's Mehsana district is drawing attention for its decision to lock up drunkards in a cage before handing them over to the police.

Villagers pooled resources to build the cage after the liquor problem escalated beyond their control and began affecting daily life. Two months on, residents report living in peace. Areas once frequented by drunkards have become safe, and those involved in producing illicit country liquor have, at least for now, stopped their activities.

"If you feel ashamed seeing this cage today, you will be reformed tomorrow... If the father is a drunkard, the child's head hangs in shame," read some of the messages painted on the cage placed at the entrance of the village.

Unanimous decision

"On December 16, 2025, during a gram sabha attended by a large number of villagers, a unanimous decision was taken to install a cage in the village to lock up drunkards before calling the police. Liquor consumption had become a major menace here, forcing us to adopt this measure," said Kapil Chaudhary of Panchha village, Kheralu taluka, in Mehsana district.

His wife Santaben is the village sarpanch.

Chaudhary said that in the past three years, the village has witnessed the deaths of at least five people, allegedly due to liquor addiction.

"Since the installation of the cage, we haven't come across a single liquor-related brawl. Earlier, such incidents were frequent. What forced the villagers to act was a video showing drunkards engaged in a fight, using expletives that were shameful. Villagers were equally angered by youngsters dying due to addiction," said VG Chaudhary, a BJP leader and principal of a school in Kheralu.

In the past, several villages across districts, including Ahmedabad, Surendranagar and Rajkot, adopted similar measures.

Some imposed fines, while others passed rules to expel drunkards from the village or socially boycott them.

This is not the only village in the state where manufacturing, sale and consumption of liquor are completely banned, except for a few with permits and visitors from other states.

On Wednesday, ahead of the state budget presentation, Congress president and MLA Amit Chavda raised the issue of the state's "failed liquor policy" in the Assembly.

SC to hear Meta-WhatsApp privacy policy case today

NEW DELHI, PTI: The Supreme Court is slated to hear on Monday pleas of Meta and WhatsApp against a Competition Commission of India (CCI) order imposing a penalty of Rs 213.14 crore over their privacy policy.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi is likely to hear the matter.

On February 3, the bench had made strong observations against Meta Platforms Inc and WhatsApp, saying they could not "play with the right to privacy of citizens in the name of data sharing" and alleged that they were creating a monopoly in the market and committing theft of private information of customers.

Decrying WhatsApp's privacy policy, the bench referred to "silent customers" who were unorganised, digitally dependent and unaware of the implications of data-sharing policies, and asserted, "We will not allow the rights of any citizen of this country to be damaged." WhatsApp is owned by Meta Platforms Inc.

The top court was hearing the appeals of the two tech giants against a CCI order that imposed a penalty of Rs 213.14 crore on them over the privacy policy.

Report on crash that killed Ajit Pawar by Feb 28: Centre

MUMBAI, DHNS: The Central government on Sunday assured that the preliminary report of the January 28 Learjet plane crash in Baramati in Maharashtra's Pune district — in which the state's then deputy chief minister and NCP president Ajit Pawar and four others died — would be released by the end of February.

"We have assured a thorough probe... The preliminary report will be out by February 28. It is mandatory to table the initial findings within one month," Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol told reporters in Pune on Sunday.

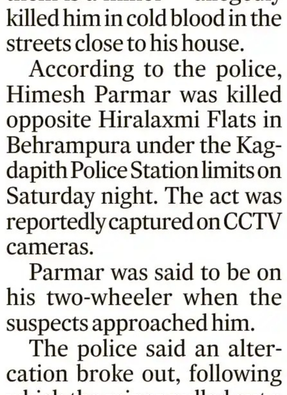
Mohol, also the BJP MP from Pune, said the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) and the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) had given updates regarding investigations being carried out by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB).

After the crash, the MoCA asked the DGCA and the AAIB to probe the accident.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has ordered a probe by the state's Crime Investigation Department (CID).

Ajit Pawar's wife and new Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar, accompanied by their elder son Parth, have met Fadnavis and senior BJP leaders, calling for a CBI probe into the accident.

Ajit's younger son Jay said he refused to believe that the Black Box was damaged in the accident and the resultant fire and explosions.


Roosters fight during a traditional cockfight organised by tribal groups in Ranchi, Jharkhand, on Sunday. PTI

JeM leader among 3 ultras killed in encounter

Said to have masterminded July 2024 strike that killed 4

ZULFIKAR MAJID
SRINAGAR, DHNS

A top Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) commander was among three terrorists killed in an encounter with security forces in the hilly Chatroo area of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K)'s Kishtwar district on Sunday, in a major blow to militant networks south of the Pir Panjal range.

Officials said preliminary assessments suggested that one of the slain was Saifullah, a senior JeM commander who had allegedly infiltrated into J&K nearly five years ago and had been active since.

He was suspected of masterminding several deadly attacks on security forces, including a July 2024 strike that killed four soldiers. Saifullah had reportedly dodged multiple operations.

The gunfight broke out in the dense forests of Passerkut-Chatroo after a joint team of the Army, J&K Police, and paramilitary forces launched a search operation based on specific intelligence inputs. As the forces closed in on a mud house where the militants were believed to be hiding, the terrorists opened fire, triggering a fierce exchange.

Reinforcements were rushed to block escape routes. The mud structure caught fire and was gutted during the encounter. Officials said the militants' bodies were charred beyond recognition, and were being formally identified. Two AK-47 rifles and ammunition were recovered from the site.

The Army said the terrorists were neutralised during "Operation Trashi-I" in the general area of Passerkut. Northern Army Commander Lt Gen Pratik Sharma commended the White Knight Corps for what he said was "swift and precise" action in difficult terrain and weather conditions. In a post on X, the Army said the Northern Command remained committed to ensuring a terror-free J&K.

Troubling shift

Sunday's encounter underscored a troubling shift in the geography of militancy. While the Kashmir Valley has traditionally been the epicentre of insurgent activity, the Jammu region witnessed violence rise over the past two years. Districts such as Kishtwar, Rajouri, Poonch, Udhampur, and Kathua saw repeated encounters and ambushes.

Security officials said groups like the JeM and the Lashkar-e-Taiba were seeking to exploit the thick forests and mountainous terrain south of the Pir Panjal to regroup and attack. Intelligence assessments pointed to renewed infiltration attempts and the use of remote hideouts.

The shift was evident in high-profile attacks in 2024 and 2025, including the Reasi pilgrimage ambush that left nine people dead, signalling militant networks' reach beyond the Valley.

In response, security forces have intensified intelligence-led operations across J&K, deploying additional troops, drones, and surveillance assets to deny militants safe havens and disrupt their networks.

2 Punjab cops found shot dead near India-Pak border

CHANDIGARH, PTI: Two personnel of Punjab Police, who were on duty near the Indo-Pak border, were found dead inside a police outpost with bullet injuries on Sunday, they said.

According to the police, the deceased were identified as Gurnam Singh and Ashok Kumar, who were posted at an outpost in Adhian in Punjab's Gurdaspur district.

While Kumar was a home guard, Gurnam was an Assistant Sub Inspector, Gurdaspur Station House Officer, Banarsi Dass said over the phone.

The bodies were discovered inside the room, which serves as an outpost, he said.

Another senior official from Gurdaspur district said the circumstances leading to the incident are under investigation.

These outposts maintained by the Punjab Police in close coordination with the Border Security Force, act as the second line of defence, he said, adding that the area where the incident occurred lies about 2 km from the Indo-Pak border.

Gurdaspur SSP Aditya said, "In the morning, we received information that two of our personnel had sustained gunshot injuries."

The police have cordoned off the crime scene, with both technical and forensic teams present there, the SSP said.

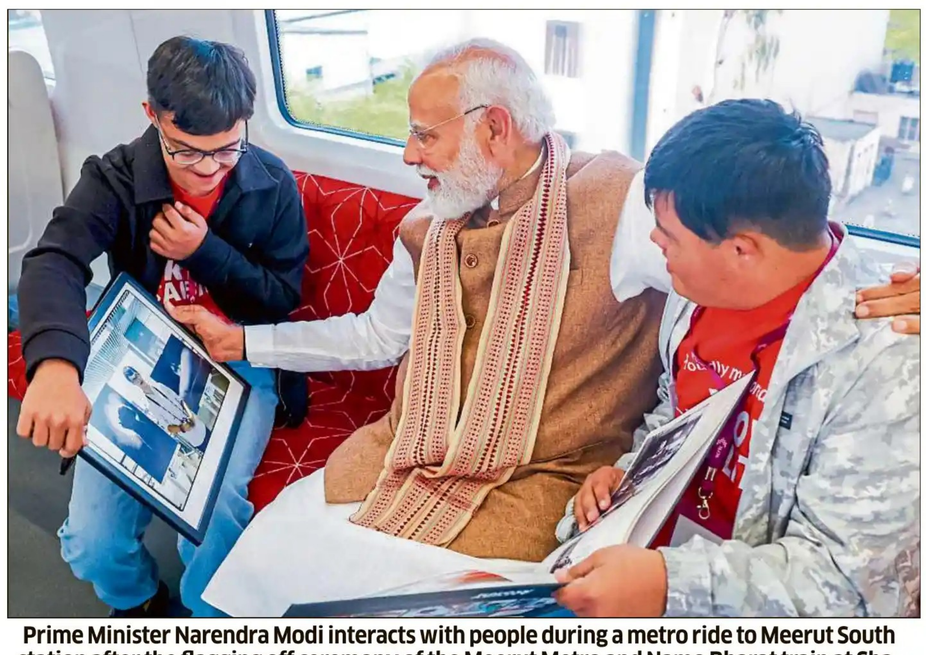
Meanwhile, Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring urged both the state and central governments to investigate the incident.

Warring in a post on X said, "It is a matter of grave concern that our two policemen were found shot dead near an outpost in Adhian village, Gurdaspur district. Our sympathies are with the bereaved families, who have lost their loved ones."

Warring further urged the governments to investigate the killings, identify the culprits and punish them.

"We can't afford to be partisan or divided on the matter of security of our people, state and the country," the Congress leader said in the post.

TRAIN TALK


Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with people during a metro ride to Meerut South station after the flagging off ceremony of the Meerut Metro and Namo Bharat train at Shatabdi Nagar Namo Bharat Station, in Meerut, on Sunday. With a design speed of 180 km per hour, Namo Bharat is India's first regional rapid transit system. PTI

7 B'deshis among 8 held in anti-India poster case

NEW DELHI, DHNS

Eight men with suspected links to terror outfits, including seven hailing from Bangladesh, have been arrested from West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, with Delhi Police on Sunday claiming that they were behind pasting anti-India posters near metro stations eulogising terrorists.

Delhi Police's Special Additional Commissioner Pramod Kumar Kushwaha told reporters that Shabbir Ahmed Lone, who was convicted following his arrest in 2007 after he came to Delhi for a 'suicide attack' to kill a politician and released in 2018-19, was their handler who was pulling the strings from Bangladesh.

He said the posters were the ones that were praising slain terrorist Burhan Wani and Pakistani terrorist actions. Police are also investigating the suspects' other plans to strike terror in the country.

The investigation started after anti-India posters were spotted on Metro pillars in Kashmere Gate on February 7, and the initial probe indicated that those behind the action had returned to Kolkata, from where they came.

With the Special Cell taking over the case five days later from local police, a team was sent to West Bengal, from where they first arrested Umar Farooq and Robil Ul Islam, a Bangladeshi national.

Kushwaha said that their interrogation and subsequent investigations led to their handler, Lone, who was linked to Lashkar-e-Taiba and had undergone basic and advanced terror training in Pakistan before 2007. After his release from prison, Lone took shelter in Bangladesh and reconnected with LeT.

"He reassembled his men and conducted dry runs with these men. He had posters put up in various locations. He did so not just in Delhi, but also in Kolkata on February 10. He also rented a house in Kolkata," Kushwaha said.

During investigations, he said, it also came to light that some Bangladeshi nationals presently based in Tamil Nadu were being taken back to Kolkata to involve them in terror activities. However, six of them—Mizanur Rahman, Mohammad Shabat, Umar, Mohammad Litan, Mohammad Shahid and Mohammad Ujjal—working in the garment industry were arrested.

Toll refund for 1 lakh motorists after gridlock on expressway

MUMBAI, PTI: More than one lakh motorists who were caught up in a massive traffic gridlock on Mumbai-Pune Expressway earlier this month after a gas tanker mishap will get toll refund cumulatively valued at Rs 5.16 crore, a senior Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation official said on Sunday.

On February 3, a gas tanker turned turtle on the Khopoli stretch of the Expressway, leading to a 33-hour disruption which saw traffic come to a standstill for several kilometres, leaving many motorists and passengers facing the shortage of water, food and other basic amenities.

Following the accident, the administration had ordered an immediate suspension of toll collection. However, by then, toll charges had already been deducted from the FASTag accounts of several motorists.

The refund will cover toll collected on both highways, the official said.

Five police personnel killed in Odisha SUV-truck collision

BHUBANESWAR, PTI: At least five police personnel were killed and four others injured in a head-on collision between an SUV and a truck on NH-49 in Odisha's Jharsuguda district on Sunday, police said.

The accident took place near Odisha Adarsh Vidyalaya when eight personnel were returning from a wedding, while the truck was moving in the opposite direction, police said.

"Five police personnel from Jharsuguda district were killed in the accident, while two were seriously injured and are undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Bargarh. The condition of another injured policeman is stable," Jharsuguda Additional Superintendent of Police Madhusikta Mishra said.

A case has been registered.

2 held for killing Ahmedabad teen who objected to loud chat

SATISH JHA
AHMEDABAD, DHNS

The Ahmedabad Police have said that two people have been arrested for the murder of a 19-year-old who repeatedly warned the accused not to speak loudly or loiter near his house.

The suspects — both teenagers as well, though one of them is a minor — allegedly killed him in cold blood in the streets close to his house.

According to the police, Himesh Parmar was killed opposite Hiralaxmi Flats in Behrampura under the Kagdapith Police Station limits on Saturday night. The act was reportedly captured on CCTV cameras.

Parmar was said to be on his two-wheeler when the suspects approached him.

The police said an altercation broke out, following which the minor pulled out a knife and repeatedly stabbed Parmar.

The Ahmedabad Detection of Crime Branch (DCB) apprehended the suspects on Sunday. DCB officials said the investigation revealed that "it was a planned, cold-blooded murder".

Probe details

"The dispute began because the victim repeatedly warned the accused not to loiter or talk loudly on his porch. In retaliation, the accused hatched a plan to eliminate him," said DCB Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Ajit Rajian.

The main accused is a 17-year-old teenager, said to have been assisted by 19-year-old Gautam Ramubhai Solanki alias Indo. "The main accused traveled to the Chotila area of Surendranagar for the sole purpose of purchasing a dagger to be used as the murder weapon," said the DCP.

The FIR stated that Parmar was stabbed in the chest, hand, fingers, left arm, and stomach. He was taken to the LG Hospital, where he reportedly succumbed to his injuries.

FOREST TO FUEL

Assam: World's 1st bamboo-based bio-ethanol plant to start in March

SUMIR KARMAKAR
NUMALIGARH (ASSAM), DHNS

Can bamboo be used as a foodstock to produce environmentally-friendly bio-ethanol? Trial production has already provided a positive outcome!

In the next couple of weeks, the world's first bamboo-based bio-ethanol plant, set up at Numaligarh in eastern Assam's Golaghat district, will start full commercial production of 2G ethanol, derived from non-food farm waste or residue.

"In the trial production, fuel-grade ethanol with 99.7% purity was produced on September 3, 2025. The first consignment was supplied to the Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) on September 9. We are now all set to start operation with full capacity in the next two weeks," a senior official from the Assam Bio Ethanol Private Limited (ABEPL) — a joint venture between the NRL, a Navaratna public-sector undertaking, and Finland-based Chempolis and Fortum — told *DH*.

The official said the plant, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated on September 14 last year, was set up based on research by the Finnish firms.

"The production of bio-ethanol will add to our government's efforts to reduce crude oil imports by Rs 230 crore annually. The plant has been set up here as the North-east has huge bamboo reserves," he said. "Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh have 178.61 million metric tons of bamboo."

Set up with an investment of Rs 4,930 crore over 43 acres, the carbon-neutral plant will look to produce 50 kilotonnes of biofuel per annum (KTPA), and may require 500 KTPA green bamboo as feedstock. It has also set a target to produce 19,000 tons of furfural per annum, 11,000 tons of acetic acid, and 25MW green power.

Boost to industry

The ABEPL has already roped in 4,200 bamboo farmers across Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh. It seeks to involve 30,000 farmers to have 12,500 hectares of bamboo in three years.

"We have already supplied 1 lakh bamboo saplings free of cost. Owners of tea gardens have largely come forward to cultivate bamboo as per government norms. Besides, farmers can use barren and discarded land for bamboo cultivation and supply," said the official. "Our target is to distribute 6 lakh saplings. This will create a lot of livelihood opportunities as well as support entrepreneurship through ancillary units."

Fissures in Maharashtra Oppn out in the open

MRITYUNJAY BOSE
MUMBAI, DHNS

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis with Deputy Chief Ministers Sunetra Pawar, Eknath Shinde and others during a press conference in Mumbai on Sunday. PTI

The fault-lines within the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) — Maharshtra's Opposition alliance — are out in the open, with the NCP (SP) leadership staying away from the coalition's crucial and customary meeting on Sunday, on the eve of the Budget session

This comes amid reports that the Sharad Pawar-led party is in talks with the NCP for a possible merger.

There is also tussle among the MVA partners — the Congress, the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT), and the NCP (SP) — over nominations for the forthcoming biennial Rajya Sabha and Maharashtra Legislative Council elections. As per numerical strength, they can win just one seat each in the two Houses.

Besides, for the second consecutive session, there is no Leader of Opposition in either the Assembly or the Council.

Neither NCP (SP) state unit president Shashikant Shinde nor top leaders like former ministers Jayant Patil, Dr Jitendra Awhad, and Rohit Pawar marked their presence in Sunday's meeting. The absences were attributed to prior commitments.

The MVA, meanwhile, boycotted the customary tea meeting hosted by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on the eve of the Budget session.

The end of the terms of Sharad Pawar (April 3, 2020 to April 2, 2026) and Uddhav Thackeray (May 14, 2020 to May 13, 2026) is expected to compound the problem for the Opposition grouping.

Uddhav is retiring as an MLC along with eight others. Meanwhile, Six others are retiring from the Rajya Sabha along with Pawar: the NCP (SP) Fauzia Khan, the BJP's Dhairyashil Mohan Patil and Bhagwat Karad, RPI (A) chief and Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale, the Congress' Rajani Patil, and the Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Priyanka Chaturvedi.

Given the numbers, the MVA can aim for one seat if it votes in unison in the RS.

Pawar had earlier indicated that he wanted to quit electoral politics. However, Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Raut pitched for the veteran in view of his importance and contributions to the state and national politics.

'Military strategist' who swiftly climbed the ranks of a banned outfit

Tippiri Tirupati, alias Devji, is linked to several attacks on security personnel

S N V SUDHIR
HYDERABAD, DHNS

Top Maoist commander Tippiri Tirupati alias Devji, who has surrendered to the Telangana Police, boasts one of the longest and most strategically influential careers in India's Naxal insurgency, rising from being a student activist to the CPI (Maoist) general secretary over four decades.

Born into a modest Madiga (Dalit) family in the Jagtial district (erstwhile Karimnagar), he finished schooling in Korutla and studied up to the intermediate level. He plunged into radical politics in the early 1980s, while pursuing a degree.

Tippiri Tirupati

"Devji's career emphasised a 'military-first' strategy, prioritising guerrilla tactics over pure ideology," a former Intelligence Bureau official with over three decades in anti-Naxal operations told *DH*.

He joined the Radical Students' Union (RSU) — the People's War Group (PWG)'s student wing. After violent clashes with rivals like the ABVP, he went underground in late 1983, starting as a dalam squad member in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli.

"He swiftly advanced to area commander, then divisional commander. His tactical acumen secured him spots on the Central Committee and Central Military Commission (CMC). He helped form the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA)," said the former IB official.

Devji shaped key events and operations, including the 2007 "Unity Congress" and the Geedam Police Station attack in Chhattisgarh. Security forces pegged him as the mastermind of the April 2010 Tadimetla (Dantewada) ambush that killed 76 CRPF personnel.

After Nambala Keshava Rao alias Basavaraju died in a May 2025 encounter, Devji became the proscribed outfit's general secretary in September 2025, the first Dalit to hold the post.

He founded the Buniyadi (Fundamental) Communist Training School in 2009 for modern guerrilla training and edited the party's underground journal Awami Jung (People's War) under aliases.

"His influence spanned the 'Red Corridor', especially Bastar (Chhattisgarh), Gadchiroli (Maharashtra), and Odisha. A pure 'military man', he led the CMC on armed operations, commanded Dandakaranya militias, oversaw the South India operations, and is infamously linked to the deadly 2010 Dantewada attack on CRPF jawans," the former intelligence official told *DH*.

First border pillar between Assam, Arunachal erected

ITANAGAR, PTI: The first border pillar between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh was erected at Seijosa on Sunday, in a significant step towards implementing the Namsai Declaration, aimed at resolving the interstate boundary dispute, officials said.

The installation of the border pillar was closely monitored by officials from both states, they said.

The Namsai Declaration was signed in July 2022, laying the foundation for resolving the long-pending boundary dispute.

Subsequently, regional committees, comprising ministers and officials from both sides, conducted joint field visits, examined historical records and interacted with local communities to arrive at mutually acceptable solutions.

"A historic milestone has been achieved in the Arunachal Pradesh-Assam boundary resolution process with the successful installation of the first official border pillar at Seijosa in Pakke Kessang district," Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu said in a post on X.

Khandu said the step reflects the spirit of the Namsai Declaration and marks a transition from decades of uncertainty towards peaceful coexistence, clarity and stability for communities living along the border.

ED sets target of filing 500 charge sheets this fiscal

NEW DELHI, PTI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has set a target of filing 500 charge sheets in money-laundering cases in the current financial year, and investigating officials have been directed to ensure that once a case is registered, the probe should be completed in one to two years, except in "complex" matters, the agency said on Sunday.

These measures were discussed and finalised during the federal probe agency's 34th Quarterly Conference of Zonal Officers (QCZO) held in Assam's capital, Guwahati, on December 19-21 last year. The meeting was chaired by ED Director Rahul Navin.

The agency has been holding this once-in-three-months conference outside Delhi since last year, with the last two editions held in Kevadia (Gujarat) and Srinagar (J&K).

"The decision to hold the conference in the north-eastern region reflects the directorate's recognition of the strategic and operational importance of the region," the ED said in a statement.

It added that the meeting was significant as it was the last before the end of the current fiscal (March 31). Officials were told that the focus must be on "meaningful" achievement of targets, logical conclusion of investigations, timely filing of prosecution complaints and ensuring that attachments and penalties are legally sustainable and effectively realised.

"The target of filing 500 prosecution complaints in the current financial year was reiterated and all field formations were urged to make efforts to achieve it while also preparing for an enhanced target in the next financial year.

"The need for this enhanced target is to proactively conclude long-pending investigations and to systematically reduce the life cycle of new investigations to a reasonable time frame of one to two years except in exceptionally complex cases," the statement said.

Tejas jet suffers damage to airframe while landing at frontline air base

NEW DELHI, PTI: A Tejas light combat aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) sustained major damage to its airframe after it overshot the runway at a frontline airbase following a suspected brake failure earlier this month, authoritative sources said on Sunday.

The pilot of the aircraft ejected safely, they said. It is learnt that the aircraft was returning to the base after carrying out a training sortie.

There was no official word from the IAF on the accident that took place on February 7.

Following the incident, the IAF grounded the entire fleet of around 30 single-seat Tejas jets to carry out an extensive technical scrutiny, the sources said.

It was the third accident involving the Tejas jets. The first one took place in March 2024, when a Tejas jet crashed near Jaisalmer.

The second incident took place in November 2025, when a Tejas jet crashed during an aerial display at the Dubai Airshow.

The latest accident comes at a time when Tejas maker Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) has missed several deadlines to supply the Tejas Mark 1A variant of the aircraft to the IAF.

In February 2021, the defence ministry sealed a Rs 48,000 crore deal with HAL for the procurement of 83 Tejas Mk-1A jets for the IAF.

The delivery of the jets is facing delays primarily due to GE Aerospace missing several deadlines for the supply of its aero engines to power the jets.

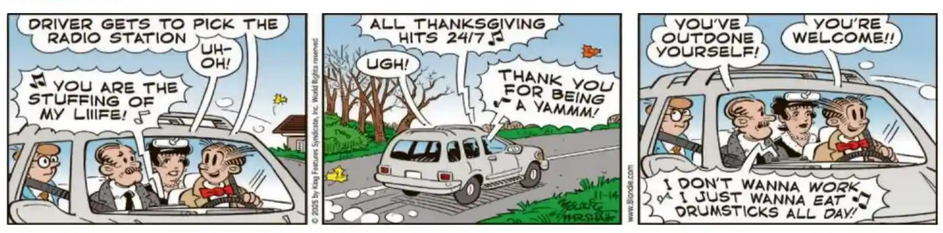
The defence ministry in September last year sealed another deal worth Rs 62,370 crore with HAL to procure 97 Tejas MK-1A light combat aircraft for the IAF.

Tejas is a single-engine multi-role fighter aircraft capable of operating in high-threat air environments.

MISCELLANY

◆ COMICS ◆

Blondie


DRIVER GETS TO PICK THE RADIO STATION
UH-OH!
♫ YOU ARE THE STUFFING OF MY LIIIFE! ♫
ALL THANKSGIVING HITS 24/7 ♫
UGH!
THANK YOU FOR BEING A YAMMM!
YOU'VE OUTDONE YOURSELF!
YOU'RE WELCOME!!
I DON'T WANNA WORK I JUST WANNA EAT DRUMSTICKS ALL DAY!

Hagar The Horrible

DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT TAKING MY GOLD!
DON'T WORRY! WE'RE DONE THINKING ABOUT THAT!
NOW WE'RE THINKING ABOUT WHAT WE'RE GOING TO BUY WITH YOUR GOLD!

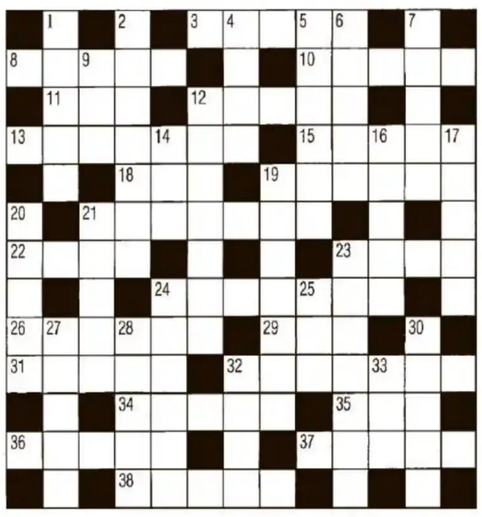
Beetle Bailey

WE'RE SKIPPING THE HIKE TODAY TO TRY THIS NEW ROPES COURSE. THIS SHOULD BE FUN!
I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU SAY! THIS ISN'T FUN!
IT IS FOR ME

Peanuts

Marvin

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 12359



ACROSS
3 Academy Award (5)
8 Wild (5)
10 Buffalo (5)
11 Mountain pass (3)
12 Cold dish (5)
13 Pilot's compartment (7)
15 Tree (5)
18 Rubbish receptacle (3)
19 Uproar (6)
21 Syrupy cough medicine (7)
22 Eagerly expectant (4)
23 Prison room (4)
24 Arms depot (7)
26 Come into view (6)
29 Rend (3)
31 Weird (5)
32 Furniture item (7)
34 Escargot (5)
35 Summit (3)
36 Light motorcycle (5)
37 Loses colour (5)
38 Speed contests (5)

DOWN
1 Lure (5)
2 Boast (4,3)
4 Hit at flies (4)
5 Counting frame (6)
6 Jockey (5)
7 Tooth type (5)
9 Legendary bird (3)
12 Open, genuine (7)
14 Narrow brooch (3)
16 Wooden peg (5)
17 Spools (5)
19 Burial, cremation (7)
20 Person receiving money (5)
21 Defeated competitor (5)
23 Metropolis (7)
24 Schedule (6)
25 Pen part (3)
27 Fruit (5)
28 Stair part (5)
30 Ward off (5)
32 Quote (4)
33 Signal agreement (3)

CRYPTIC

ACROSS
3 Was able to start up in frosty conditions (5)
8 It's long, pretty thin, but could be comic (5)
10 Prepared possibly to read about an Ian Fleming character (5)
11 Vehicle wrecked by Ted (3)
12 Anne's back at the plant (5)
13 To beat one's victim is a bit fishy (7)
15 In modern times, men bring things up to date (5)
18 Grazing some fragile area (3)
19 Country place offering a good choice (6)
21 Swell job as a model (7)
22 Blue essay about love (4)
23 Country of current interest (4)
24 Crashed, RAF style (7)
26 Badly hurt, he'd be on oxygen, perhaps (6)
29 Attributable to moisture, we hear (3)
31 Get into alien territory (5)
32 Persuaded a casual worker to make hay (7)
34 It's a boring thing (5)
35 A little matter at the rationing centre (3)
36 All of them may be crawled on (5)
37 Not at all like a married couple (5)
38 The date of decimation? (5)

DOWN
1 How to turn desperate (2,3)
2 Show a girl's fun (7)
4 Conform with honour on May 3 (4)
5 Scottish landmark with a bit missing (6)
6 Drink one in play (5)
7 Existing by begging, having lost a horse (5)
9 The odd bit of crumpet (3)
12 Main direction of the sick bay? (7)
14 Name a redheaded former spouse (3)
16 Came to a conclusion (5)
17 Only a start, but you finish in debt (5)
19 At summer's end, the garden can be even finer (7)
20 Put on new gates (5)
21 It's close at hand (5)
23 Looking like Tom (7)
24 Read how to make purees (6)
25 Mug up something sticky (3)
27 On the fourth of July, he could have partnered Cleopatra (5)
28 To learn the tango takes courage! (5)
30 Start again with a newer blend (5)
32 You could see it on telly, we hear (4)
33 A mobility aid (3)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 2668

ACROSS: 1 Deadpan, 5 Pliable, 9 Affront, 10 Impress, 11 Trite, 12 Set eyes on, 13 Cut it fine, 15 Hedge, 16 After, 18 Easy-going, 21 Conundrum, 24 Judge, 25 Abridge, 26 Pennant, 27 Comment, 28 Ecstasy.

DOWN: 1 Drastic, 2 Afflict, 3 Protector, 4 Notes, 5 Pointless, 6 Imply, 7 Blessed, 8 Essence, 14 In earnest, 15 High jinks, 16 Archaic, 17 Tantrum, 19 Indiana, 20 Greatly, 22 Nudge, 23 Maple.

◆SU-DO-KU-6837◆

	9					6		2
5	6				9	7	1	
4			2	8			6	
			4		3			
	3			6	1			9
	4	7	9				5	3
8		6					7	

hard

SOLUTION TO 6836

5	1	3	2	6	4	7	9	8
9	8	4	5	1	7	3	6	2
7	2	6	9	8	3	5	1	4
4	9	8	7	2	6	1	3	5
1	5	2	8	3	9	6	4	7
6	3	7	1	4	5	8	2	9
8	6	9	4	7	1	2	5	3
2	4	1	3	5	8	9	7	6
3	7	5	6	9	2	4	8	1

To solve the puzzle: To solve a su-do-ku puzzle, every digit from1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

SCRABBLE™

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							Triple Word Score	RACK 1
A1	A1	A1	B3	R1	Z10	A1		
								RACK 2
N1	N1	C3	D2	F4	U1	E1		
								RACK 3
O1	S1	M3	S1	R1	E1	I1		
								RACK 4
X8	F4	E1	R1	I1	O1	F4	Double Word Score	

PAR SCORE 140-150
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

C3	L1	A1	S1	S1	E1	D2	RACK 1 =	80
S1	E1	A1	S1	I1	D2	E1	RACK 2 =	66
A1	L1	G2	E1	B3	R1	A1	RACK 3 =	60
M3	A1	R1	Q10	U1	E1	E1	RACK 4 =	88
								294

PAR SCORE 190-200 JUDD'S TOTAL

JUMBLE®

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

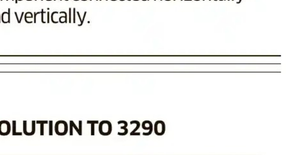
Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

SOSLH

LFAIN

GATOEU

SWNIUE


You're doing a great job! You make me really proud.
Thanks, Pops!
8/14
THINKING OF THE MILKY WAY GALAXY AS A PARENT, OUR LOCAL STAR IS ---

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Twitter @PlayJumble

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

"_____" (Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: CHOMP YEAST MERELY DONKEY
Answer: To show his grandchildren where he bowled a perfect game, they went to — MEMORY LANE

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HITORI-3291

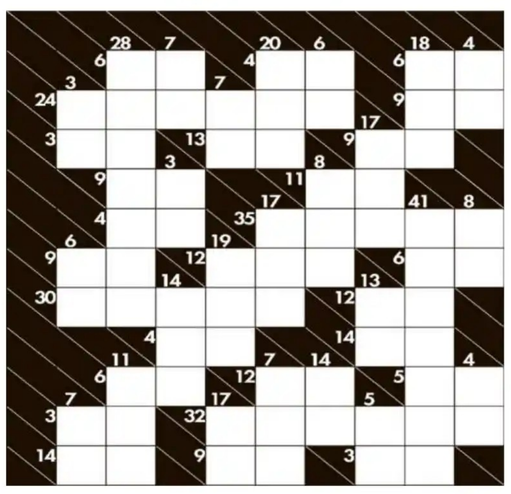
4	5	8	8	1	4	5	3
2	1	2	6	7	5	8	5
3	8	6	5	4	3	2	7
6	3	5	2	5	6	4	4
4	5	5	8	3	8	2	6
5	6	2	3	5	1	7	4
3	7	7	5	2	5	5	1
2	7	4	1	7	2	5	2

SOLUTION TO 3290

■	8	4	1	2	■	7	■
4	■	8	■	7	1	3	5
2	6	■	4	8	■	1	7
5	2	3	6	■	7	■	8
8	■	5	■	1	6	2	3
1	3	■	5	6	■	4	■
■	4	6	■	3	2	5	1
6	7	1	3	■	8	■	4

To solve the puzzle: Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

KAKURO- 3291



SOLUTION TO 3290

To solve the puzzle: Put a number from 1 through 9 in a cell. No zeros. A number in a cell separated by diagonal line tells the sum of numbers in consecutive cells at its right or downward. No number may appear more than once in consecutive cells.

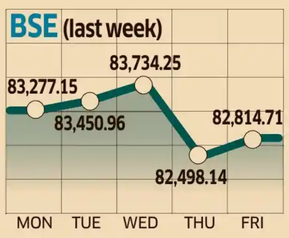
SU DO KU X - 3836

■				8	1		7	■
6	7		5		2	1	■	■
		■		4		■		
7		2	■		5	9	6	
				■	9			
		8	3		■			
		■				■		
	■						1	
■			6			8		■

SOLUTION TO 3835

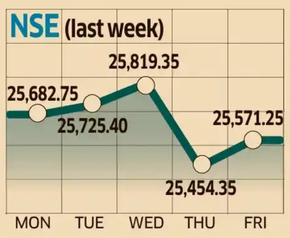
1	6	3	2	7	8	9	5	4
4	8	5	6	1	9	7	3	2
2	9	7	5	4	3	8	6	1
9	5	2	4	3	7	6	1	8
7	3	1	8	6	2	5	4	9
8	4	6	1	9	5	3	2	7
6	1	9	3	8	4	2	7	5
3	2	8	7	5	1	4	9	6
5	7	4	9	2	6	1	8	3

To solve the puzzle: The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.



*Data as of Feb 20

TOP GAINERS		TOP LOSERS	
LT	4.97%	ETERNAL	-5.70%
ITC	4.27%	TECHM	-5.09%
POWERGRID	4.00%	TRENT	-3.82%
NTPIC	2.78%	M&M	-3.42%
ASIANPAINT	2.71%	MARUTI	-1.58%



TOP GAINERS		TOP LOSERS	
L&T	4.95%	ETERNAL	-5.52%
HDFC LIFE INS	4.57%	TECH MAHINDRA	-5.05%
ITC	4.22%	TRENT	-3.79%
ONGC	4.21%	MAHI&MAHI	-3.41%
POWERGRID	4.09%	HERO MOTOCORP	-2.13%

Sensex (52-week)

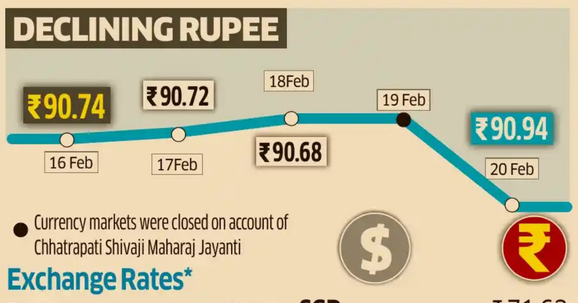
Feb 16, 2025	Feb 16, 2026	
75,735.96	82,814.71	9.35%

Nifty (52-week)

Feb 16, 2025	Feb 16, 2026	
22,913.15	25,571.25	11.60%

10-year Bond yield 6.72%

DECLINING RUPEE



● Currency markets were closed on account of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti

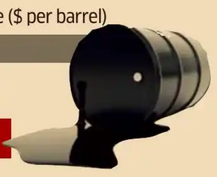
Exchange Rates*

Dollar	₹ 90.94	SGD	₹ 71.63
Pound	₹ 122.29	Yen (100 units)	₹ 58.60
Euro	₹ 106.90		

*Price at which banks sell

Crude Oil Rate ($ per barrel)

BRENT CRUDE
$71.76*
▲ 0.14%



*Rate as of Feb 20

Bengaluru fuel pump price*

(Retail)
Petrol* ₹102.96 ₹0% ↔
Diesel* ₹90.99 ₹0% ↔

*Rates as of Feb 21 #Rate change compared with yesterday

Commodity watch

COFFEE

Category	Rate (Rs per 50 kg)*
Arabica Parchment	₹ 22500 - 23000
Arabica Cherry	₹ 11800 - 13200
Robusta Parchment	₹ 17250 - 17750
Robusta Cherry	₹ 9500 - 10300

*Rates as on Feb 19

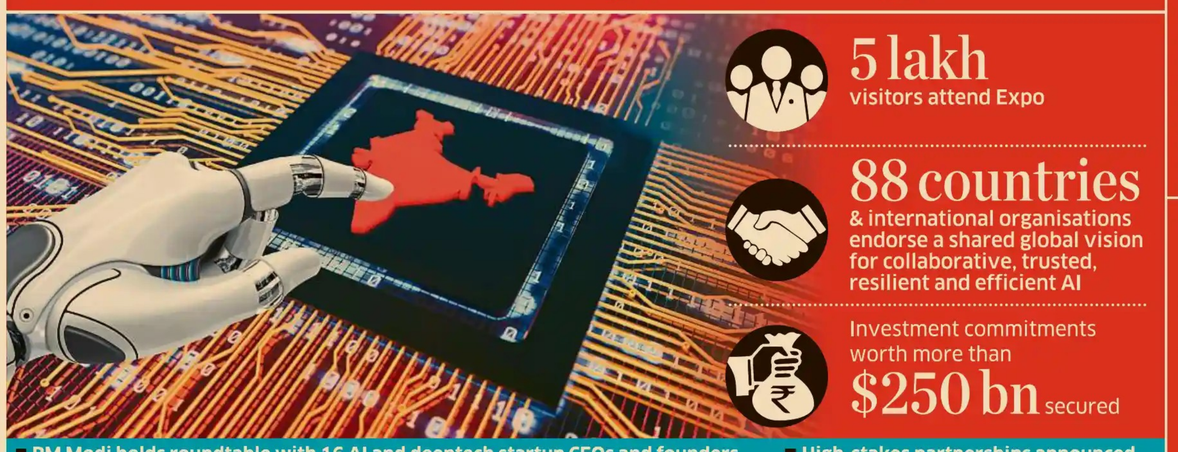
Other Commodities

Silkworm cocoon (Rs per kg)*

Bivoltine (BV)	₹ 823
Cross Breed (CB)	₹ 732

*Average rates as on Feb 20

India AI Impact Summit 2026: Key Takeaways



5 lakh visitors attend Expo

88 countries & international organisations endorse a shared global vision for collaborative, trusted, resilient and efficient AI

Investment commitments worth more than **$250 bn** secured

■ PM Modi holds roundtable with 16 AI and deeptech startup CEOs and founders ■ High-stakes partnerships announced

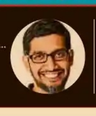
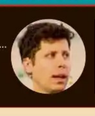
Declaration structured around 7 key pillars:

1. Democratising AI Resources
2. Economic Growth & Social Good
3. Secure & Trusted AI
4. AI for Science
5. Access for Social Empowerment
6. Human Capital Development
7. Resilient, Efficient & Innovative AI Systems

Declaration Highlights:

1. The role of AI in driving economic transformation
2. Importance of open-source and accessible AI ecosystems
3. Need for energy-efficient AI infrastructure
4. Expanding AI's role in science, governance, and public service delivery

Prominent CEOs of global companies in attendance

Google: **Sundar Pichai** 
OpenAI: **Sam Altman** 
Anthropic: **Dario Amodei**
Google DeepMind: **Demis Hassabis**
Adobe: **Shantanu Narayen**
Qualcomm: **Cristiano Amon**

Big tech giants in attendance: India sets course for AI

High-profile event sees several commitments made, a technology-driven future envisioned

UMA KANNAN
NEW DELHI, DHNS

From AI engineers, researchers to policymakers and top CEOs, everyone described Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a significant force that would guide the world towards development. At the same time, various countries and organisations endorsed a vision for trusted, resilient and efficient AI. The India AI Impact Summit 2026, held in New Delhi from February 16 to 20, attracted over five lakh visitors, and featured prominent figures in the global tech industry and international politics, who acknowledged that the future will be shaped by technological breakthroughs, while highlighting the need for partnerships and infrastructure investment.

Big tech giants and AI startups announced their partnerships at the summit. Google CEO Sundar Pichai said we are on the cusp of hyper progress and new discoveries that can help emerging economies leapfrog legacy gaps. "But that outcome is neither guaranteed nor automatic. To build AI that is truly helpful for everyone, we must pursue it boldly, approach it responsibly and work through this defining moment together," he said at the opening ceremony of the summit. Google has trained 100 million people in digital skills. On infrastructure, Pichai said Google's $15 billion investment in India, including an AI hub in Visakhapatnam that "will house gigawatt-scale compute when finished", will bring cutting-edge capabilities to businesses across the country.

Microsoft Vice-Chair Brad Smith addressed the growing AI divide. Solutions will not come easily. The needs are multifaceted, and will require substantial investments, he said. From OpenAI boss Sam Altman to Anthropic chief Dario Amodei, CEOs spoke about India's advantages and its AI potential. Microsoft announced that it is on pace to invest $50 billion by the end of the decade, to help bring AI to countries across the Global South. At the summit, Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani announced a Rs 10 lakh crore investment over seven years to build the country's sovereign AI infrastructure.

While the sessions were quite interesting, what caught the attention of the general public and students was the exhibition that demonstrated the country's potential in creating various AI-led innovations and solutions.

In a couple of years, across sectors, professionals can employ various agents to perform their tasks. Cutting-edge technologies and energy-efficient AI systems, apart from Voice AI models, caught the attention of visitors. Thirteen country pavilions — Australia, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Serbia, Estonia, Tajikistan, and a collective African pavilion — all displayed their ideas and investments.

Due to overwhelming interest in the expo, the government extended the exhibition till February 21. In his inaugural address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said this is the country's benchmark for artificial intelligence. Any AI model that succeeds in India, he said, can be deployed globally.

At the French Pavilion, visited by President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Modi, 29 companies displayed France's technological edge. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) attracted many visitors, as it demonstrated the country's role in driving electronics and IT innovation policies. Sarvam AI drew attendees through live showcases of its India-focused foundational AI models built for local languages, enterprises, and public sector applications. BharatGPT presented multilingual AI models tailored to the country's diverse linguistic and digital landscape. Gnani.ai introduced Inya VoiceOS at the summit, a 5-billion-parameter, voice-first AI model designed for multilingual speech, enabling seamless and natural voice-to-voice interactions for government, enterprise, and public sector applications.

During the summit, many partnerships were announced. On February 20, India announced that it joined the Pax Silica initiative by becoming a signatory to the Pax Silica Declaration. India also signed a Joint Statement on the 'India-U.S. AI Opportunity Partnership' as a bilateral addendum to the Declaration. Companies such as Tata Group tied up with OpenAI. At the summit, OpenAI for India, a nationwide initiative with leading Indian partners to expand access to AI and unlock its economic and societal benefits in the world's largest democracy, was also announced.

Series of setbacks

Though the event attracted global delegates, leading AI startups' CEOs and innovators, there were a few setbacks, including logistics issues and traffic snarls. India hosted one of the biggest events, but several delegates expressed frustration over its organisation.

It was a tough task for some speakers to reach seminar halls due to significant traffic issues. Even former UK prime minister Rishi Sunak, who arrived late for a session, said, "AI can do many things, but it can't yet fix Delhi's traffic."

Though companies and universities displayed their cutting-edge technologies, Galgotias University, which passed off a Chinese-made robot dog as their students' creation, caused embarrassment to the organisers. The university displayed the Chinese-made robotic dog 'Orion', as a product developed by its Centre of Excellence. Also, the hand-holding moment of two AI giants OpenAI CEO Sam Altman and Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei went viral. Both refused to hold hands at the summit. However, Altman later stated that he was confused and did not know what he was supposed to do.

On the last day of the summit, February 20, a group of protesters, linked to the Indian Youth Congress (IYC), stormed the expo, holding or wearing T-shirts bearing phrases such as "PM is compromised".

India can emerge key APAC data centre hub, must leverage renewables, says Deloitte

NEW DELHI, PTI: India has the potential to emerge as a key data centre hub in the Asia Pacific region, provided it can resolve complex power and grid challenges and align renewable integration with rapid digital growth, says a Deloitte report.

While India accounts for nearly 20% of global data consumption, it hosts less than 5% of the world's data centres, underscoring significant headroom for expansion, said Debasish Mishra, Chief Growth Officer, Deloitte South Asia, highlighting the report brought out at India AI Impact Summit 2026.

India, he said, has a "rare structural opportunity" to emerge as one of the world's leading data centre hubs.

Structural advantages such as lower construction and land costs, competitive power tariffs and a large AI-skilled workforce position the country favourably. Policy support is also strengthening, with Budget 2026-27 proposing a tax holiday until 2047 for foreign companies offering cloud services globally from India, along with preferential tax treatment to incentivise data centre investments.

The report said APAC is projected to attract about $800 billion in data centre investment by 2030, raising its share of global capacity to 40% and making it the largest market outside North America. India is seen as one of the strongest contenders to capture a significant portion of this growth.

Mishra said India's data centre capacity is expected to expand from around 1.5 GW in 2025 to 8-10 GW by 2030.

RBI builds secure data centre away from potential enemy strikes, seismic risks

Facility in Odisha to safeguard critical financial infra, strengthen continuity of core systems

NEW DELHI, PTI

The Reserve Bank of India has built a high-security data centre in Odisha, strategically located well away from potential cross-border threat zones and high seismic-risk regions, as part of efforts to safeguard critical financial infrastructure and strengthen continuity of core systems.

The greenfield facility in Bhubaneswar is designed to house core computing systems supporting the central bank's currency management, payment and settlement operations, and regulatory data functions, analysts and officials said.

"When RBI began work on its 18.55-acre campus at Info Valley-II, Khordha in 2023, few questioned the location. Beyond logistical and operational considerations, strategic factors are likely to have weighed on decision-makers," an analyst tracking the sector said.

The Odisha site, he added, lies well-away from India's western and northern borders, reducing exposure to potential cross-border missile or drone threats. It also falls outside the country's highest seismic risk zones, lowering vulnerability to major earthquake activity — factors that "strengthen the safety and continuity framework for infrastructure that underpins critical financial systems", he said.

This is RBI's second data centre; the Primary Data Centre is located in Kharghar, Navi Mumbai.

Another analyst noted that unlike Mumbai and Chennai, which host a large share of India's data centres, Odisha is not a landing point for major subsea communication cables. By situating the facility away from these hubs and dense digital traffic corridors, the RBI may be seeking infrastructure that is more insulated from concentrated cyber risks and network vulnerabilities, he added.

The central bank's site strategy appeared to gain resonance last year, when a leading commercial bank reportedly shifted its data centre operations overnight from Jaipur to Mumbai, amid heightened tensions during the India-Pakistan conflict, which saw the use of drones along the border.

An email sent to RBI for comments remained unanswered.

World over, central banks and top financial institutions are increasingly building and operating their own secured data centres, prioritising data safety, operational control and systemic resilience over reliance on public infrastructure, analysts say.

Industry officials said the primary driver is safety of financial data — viewed as critical national infrastructure — alongside the need to guard against cyberattacks, vendor lock-in and operational disruptions. For central banks in particular, direct control over infrastructure allows stricter enforcement of security protocols, redundancy planning and regulatory compliance.

With digital transactions and real-time payment systems expanding rapidly, authorities are treating secure data infrastructure not merely as an IT asset, but as a cornerstone of financial stability.

In India, RBI is creating a secure, sovereign platform for banks and payment systems much like the US Federal Reserve Bank operating highly-secured facilities such as the East Rutherford Operations Center, which houses key payment and settlement infrastructure.

The site was built with layered physical and cyber safeguards to ensure uninterrupted functioning of core financial systems and a similar architecture is being followed by RBI.

The Odisha facility has been designed and built to ensure a high level of redundancy, resilience and system availability, incorporating in-built fault tolerance, according to RBI. It has achieved Tier-IV certification for its design, underscoring its compliance with the highest standards of reliability and performance.

Other than the RBI, institutions such as the Securities and Exchange Board of India and the State Bank of India have built or are building their own data centres, officials said.

Analysts noted that data centres require land, water and power, all available in abundance in Odisha, and that the location offers strategic depth from potential cross-border threats, while avoiding concentration of critical infrastructure in high-risk corridors. From a geological standpoint, large parts of Odisha lie in lower seismic risk zones compared with the Himalayan belt, reducing vulnerability to high-intensity earthquakes.

"With financial data now treated as critical national infrastructure, the RBI's move signals a broader policy thrust: retain tight institutional control over mission-critical systems, minimise exposure to external threats, and ensure uninterrupted functioning of the country's financial backbone under extreme scenarios," another analyst said.

As of 2025, the RBI is also launching a pilot cloud facility with data centres in Mumbai and Hyderabad to provide local cloud storage to financial firms.

FUTURE ROADMAP

'AI is moving from assistive to autonomous; from copilots to agents'

UMA KANNAN
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The next generation of enterprise software will not just have AI features, but will behave like an operating model: autonomous, resilient, and sovereign, Kalyan Kumar, Chief Product Officer at HCLSoftware, told *DH*.

HCLSoftware is the software business division of IT services company HCLTech. The company displayed its latest enterprise solutions at the India AI Impact Expo 2026, and it shared how it orchestrates experience, data and operations to take AI from pilots into production outcomes.

Kumar said AI is moving from assistive to autonomous — from copilots to agents that can initiate and complete work end-to-end.

"Our focus is building what we call a self-driving enterprise capability, but with governance-by-design so autonomy scales without losing accountability," he said. That means three solution thrusts:

- **Sovereign-by-design AI stacks:** (Choice of deployment: on-prem, private cloud, sovereign infrastructure), because enterprises are rethinking what must remain under their control
- **Data-first intelligence:** Untangling data from apps, mastering metadata, and creating the orchestration layer that makes AI reliable in complex enterprises
- **Agentic Services as Platform (ASaP):** Codifying repeatable services (ops, security, marketing, workflow) into software + AI, so outcomes are consistent, measurable, and scalable

According to Kumar, the summit is a turning point because it is explicitly about impact — moving from AI experimentation to measurable outcomes.

India's role in this AI era is evolving from being known primarily as a talent hub to becoming a trust-and-scale hub — a place that can operationalise AI for real problems, across languages, industries, and populations. India's experience in building large-scale digital public infrastructure is increasingly seen as a blueprint for deploying technology responsibly at national scale, he added.

India is putting real weight behind AI capacity — compute, data centres, and sovereign approaches — because the next phase of AI is not just about models, it is about who controls the stack, where the data lives, and how governance is built in. "India's opportunity is to be the place where AI becomes trustworthy, affordable, and deployable at scale — not just impressive in a lab," the chief product officer said.

Kalyan Kumar

"Our 'India play' is not just about building in the country — it's about enabling sovereign, compliant AI for Indian enterprises. For example, we've announced a sovereign AI stack approach with Sify that keeps enterprise data within national borders and under Indian jurisdiction — especially relevant for BFSI, healthcare, and government," he said.

Talking about clients, Kumar said clients' interest in AI solutions is higher than ever, and that it is also more mature. Clients are asking tougher questions now: "What's the ROI (Return on investment)? How do we secure it? How do we govern it? How do we keep control of data and continuity?"

"We're seeing many organisations hit the same wall: they can run pilots, but struggle to scale. And the blocker is rarely which model — it's the enterprise reality of fragmented data, integration complexity, and missing governance. We're also seeing a strong shift to hybrid and private AI stacks for sensitive workloads — because as AI becomes core to operations, choice and control become board-level requirements," he explained.

Kumar said that they are not sprinkling AI on top of legacy environments, they are building a unified engine that orchestrates Experience, Data and Operations (XDO), so AI decisions are grounded in real enterprise context. He pointed out that customers see benefits in five areas:

- **Faster time-to-value:** Move from pilots to production with repeatable patterns and orchestration
- **Governed autonomy:** AI agents that can act, but with guardrails, auditability, and accountability
- **Sovereignty and compliance:** Control across IP, data, technology, and commercial continuity — especially critical in regulated industries
- **Reduced complexity for regulated AI:** a managed 'sovereign foundation + applications' approach, so enterprises don't have to assemble the stack themselves.
- **Security built in:** Embedding security and remediation into the life cycle (not bolted on at the end)

The real benefit is not 'AI inside the product' — it is AI you can trust, govern, and run at scale without losing control, he added.

Frictionless markets, restless investors

ANUBHAV SRIVASTAVA
MANAGING PARTNER, ARYZEN CAPITAL ADVISORS

Investing has never been more accessible. The rise of technology-focused brokerage firms has provided investors an unprecedented access to information, speed and a wide range of investment options in one place. Securities, which once required significant effort to participate in, are now available at the click of a button. Yet long-term behaviour has not necessarily improved. This is visible in rising equity and derivative volumes and in the increasing frequency of portfolio churn. The conundrum lies in a simple shift: technology has made it easier, but not necessarily simpler. Trading became frictionless. Investing did not.

How did this transformation unfold? Electronic interaciton at exchanges first enabled smoother flows of data and faster price discovery. The real turning point, however, was online-platforms which removed the need for human intermediaries. Initially, high costs and limited advice kept growth of investor numbers constrained. The arrival of low-cost discount brokers transformed this landscape. Costs collapsed, reach widened and retail traders expanded rapidly. Investor education initiatives also improved, supported by regulatory focus and greater availability of knowledge. These developments created powerful communication highways, but questions of direction and discipline remained largely unaddressed. The responsibility for judgement shifted decisively to individuals.

As multitudes signed up and costs fell, their behaviour began to change in visible ways. Faster implementation and constant information have increased trading frequency, shortened holding periods and encouraged more frequent portfolio changes. Digital interfaces are built for speed and rapid decision-making, continuously prompting engagement through price updates, alerts and news. While trading thrives on such activity, investing often demands restraint and the ability to remain inactive for long periods. When execution becomes effortless, decisions can turn episodic and reactive, shaped more by convenience than long-term reasoning.

These behavioural shifts have produced visible consequences. One of the most common is portfolio sprawl, now seen across many retail and even high-net-worth portfolios. People accumulate positions across sectors and instruments without a clear framework, often reacting to trends or short-term opportunities. Sector familiarity bias, particularly among professionals investing in their own industries, rising confidence during bull runs and momentum-driven decision-making can all lead to frequent reshuffling of portfolios. Lower friction increases turnover, and investors may begin to mistake speed for control. This simplicity can create an illusion of simplicity in outcomes, even when underlying risks remain complex.

These trends matter because they conflict with the basic mechanics of investing itself - a natural resistance to speed. Wealth creation in the financial world is closely linked to compounding, which unfolds gradually over time rather than through constant activity. A simple way to observe this is to examine any broad chart. At close range, one sees sharp crests and troughs, reflecting short-term volatility and shifting sentiment. Viewed over longer periods, however, these fluctuations tend to smoothen into an upward drift. This drift reflects compounding, economic growth and the steady demand for returns from financial assets. Attempting to capture every short-term movement can disrupt this process rather than enhance it.

Compounding is not the only challenge. Valuation cycles persist, and in the short run investors may find themselves caught in value traps or drawn into enduring bubbles, both with undesirable consequences. Investment outcomes remain uncertain, and risk cannot be entirely eliminated through better systems or faster execution. Patience, control and time continue to play a central role, qualities which cannot be automated or compressed.

Taken together, these changes point to a broader shift. Technology has reshaped systems, and with the advent of artificial intelligence and large language models, this participation is likely to expand further. In a growing economy, wider participation is both inevitable and desirable, reflecting deeper financialisation of household savings and greater engagement with capital markets. Yet this transformation also marks an important change. While access has been democratised, responsibility for judgement now rests more firmly with the investor. Their future may well depend on how they balance convenience with discipline in an increasingly frictionless world.

TOP PICKS

The data is sourced from Motilal Oswal Financial Services Limited

Kirloskar Oil Engines
(ID: KIRLOSENG)
BUY
Upside +13%**
Last close ₹1,419
Target: ₹1,600*

Delhivery
(ID: DELHIVERY)
BUY
Upside +35%**
Last close ₹431
Target: ₹580*

Lenskart
(ID: LENSKART)
BUY
Upside +22%**
Last close ₹490
Target: ₹600*

Apollo Hospitals
(ID: APOLLOHOSP)
BUY
Upside +18%**
Last close ₹7,615
Target: ₹9,015*

Max Life
(ID: MFSL)
BUY
Upside +19%**
Last close ₹1,850
Target: ₹2,200*

* Target price has been calculated on the basis of fundamentals ** Upside refers to more value stock is expected to generate than its current price

Is investing in IT sector an opportunity or a dead end?

Cash-rich large IT companies will take all steps to protect and boost revenue growth

RUSHABH DESAI

As on February 20, 2026, the Nifty IT index saw a sharp fall of around -16% in a month and has overall fallen by around -30% from its all-time highs made in December 2024. This fall is based on the fears of global AI innovative technologies disrupting the Indian IT sector which is mainly service driven which in turn could affect future growth, revenues, and jobs. FIIs sold over Rs 10,956 crore from the IT sector in first half of February 2026 alone reallocating to other sectors and US-listed pure AI. This clearly points out weak market sentiments towards the Indian IT sector and the sentiments could remain weak till companies and the sector shows a clear executionary road map of change towards innovation and adaptability of AI technologies to protect and boost revenue growth.

The Indian IT sector is not going to die as global technological fears have been present in the past as well. The pain of correction has been sharp as the AI technological transition has been much quicker this time. There are no doubts AI technologies will change a lot of things like the way companies hire, the way they train and the way they deploy & execute technologies but at the same time technology does not eliminate the need for experts, it usually upgrades their toolkit and AI will make them faster, smarter, and scalable.

Indian IT companies have displayed good earnings growth in Q3FY26 despite seasonally weak conditions and the large cap companies are cash rich thus all steps will be taken in line with the global technological changes to protect and boost revenue growth. Looking at our strong corporate leadership, political will, and the sheer size of our talent pool the Indian IT sector is only expected to thrive and grow. We expect momentum to set in as AI services demand begins to inflect into 2026. Large IT companies may take some time to adapt but mid and small Indian ones may adapt quickly and scale up fast.

The Indian IT sector is trading at a P/E ratio of 22.1x, near its 10-year average of 21.6x as on January 31, 2026 and with the sharp price fall seen in the month of February 2026 valuations have dropped below its 10-year average making both prices and valuations very attractive. The current drawdown of the Nifty IT index from its all-time highs along with attractive valuations suggests very good investment opportunity from a tactical bet point of view.

Broadly the Nifty IT index has been consistent on a 5-year daily rolling returns basis generating an average return of 15.5% CAGR and delivering >=12% CAGR returns 70% and >=15% CAGR 53% of the time since 2004 as on 2026 but the sector has also been cyclical and volatile from time to time displaying sharp drawdowns of around -55% in CY 2008 and -33% in 2020. Thus, even from these attractive levels a minimum 5-year investment period is essential. Any investment made in the IT sector should be a tactical call and exiting at the right time is very important.

Individual companies may rise and fall but sectors thrive and grow thus rather than betting on individual companies it is wise to bet on the overall IT sector through active and/or index mutual funds. For a long-term bet choose an active fund and for short to medium term tactical bet choose an index fund. Choose active sectoral funds carefully as certain active funds have displayed out performance and some have not vs its index. Follow lumpsum buy on dips strategy and do not go overboard, stick with 5-7% tactical exposure. Please keep in mind that sectoral bets are for investors who can take high risk and understand market cycles.

(The writer is the founder of Rupee With Rushabh Investment Services)

WEEK AHEAD

Rising geopolitical tensions to drive markets

Sectoral rotation and stock-specific actions are likely to dominate

SIDDHARTHA KHEMKA

Indian equities are likely to trade in a narrow range next week amid rising geopolitical tensions, limited domestic catalysts, and with the earnings season largely behind us. Institutional flows remain the key monitorable, as sustained FII participation has supported recent stability. While geopolitical developments warrant close monitoring, markets may remain in consolidation mode unless tensions escalate materially and disrupt energy flows. In such a backdrop, sectoral rotation and stock-specific action are likely to dominate, keeping the Nifty range-bound with limited directional bias.

Key data releases
- Eurozone CPI
- US Initial Jobless Claims
- India's quarterly GDP and US PPI

Key economic releases this week include Eurozone CPI, US Initial Jobless Claims, India's quarterly GDP and US PPI, with stability in global bond yields remaining critical for near-term direction. On the policy front, an interim India–US trade agreement is reportedly expected to be signed in March and operationalised in April, with chief negotiators set to meet in Washington next week to finalise the first phase of the bilateral framework.

Last week, equity markets were largely subdued. The Nifty50 ended lower, down 1.5%, while the Nifty Midcap100 lost 2.2% and the Nifty Smallcap100 declined 2.7%. Sectorally, performance was polarised, with PSU banks emerging as the top gainers (+4.5%), followed by Bank Nifty (+0.7%), while IT (-8.8%) lagged.

Despite the recent 15% correction in the Nifty IT Index amid AI disruption concerns, developments this week suggest the debate is shifting from existential risk to opportunity capture. The AI Impact Summit held in New Delhi reinforced India's ambition to position itself as a meaningful participant in the global AI ecosystem, with firms such as OpenAI and Anthropic deepening engagement with Indian enterprises. TCS unveiled a collaboration with OpenAI focused on AI infrastructure and enterprise deployment, while Infosys, at its own AI-focused Investor Day, outlined its roadmap across enterprise integration and governance and announced a partnership with Anthropic to strengthen its enterprise AI offerings. For investors, the debate is shifting from productivity disruption toward value redistribution. Enterprise complexity, cybersecurity oversight and large-scale systems integration continue to anchor vendor relevance, suggesting AI is more likely to reshape service mix and pricing models rather than structurally displace incumbents.

Apart from nervousness around IT sector, geopolitical developments also contributed to the cautiousness in the market sentiments. Escalating rhetoric around Iran injected fresh volatility into global markets, as investors priced in the risk of energy supply disruptions. With an estimated 40–50% of India's energy imports transiting through the Strait of Hormuz, the country remains sensitive to any escalation in the region. The resulting risk premium in crude, alongside gains in gold and silver as traditional safe havens, reflects defensive global positioning. Elevated realisations, however, are supportive for upstream producers such as Oil India and ONGC, which could remain in focus.

Auto ancillaries on the other hand, are likely to remain in focus and do well amid improving structural tailwinds. Lower US tariff barriers and recent FTAs with the EU enhance export competitiveness for Indian component makers, supporting order inflows and capacity utilisation for export-oriented players. Domestically, the Union Budget's emphasis on manufacturing, capex and localisation supports incremental volume growth across PV and CV segments, while ongoing global supply-chain diversification is increasing sourcing from India, strengthening medium-term revenue visibility for well-diversified ancillary units.

Meanwhile, PSU banks continued to attract attention, supported by strengthening institutional positioning. Mutual fund allocation to the sector rose to a three-year high in January, signalling improving domestic conviction.

Overall, while geopolitical risks warrant close monitoring, domestic sectoral opportunities and institutional positioning continue to drive stock-specific action, keeping the broader market in a consolidation phase with a mildly positive undertone.

(The writer is Head of Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Limited)

YES Bank eyes 1% ROA in FY26

NEW DELHI, PTI: Private sector lender YES Bank which is on the recovery path expects to close the ongoing financial year with a return on assets of 1%, the bank's Chief Financial Officer Niranjan Banodkar said.

Return on assets (ROA) is a profitability metric that measures how efficiently a bank uses its assets to generate profit. A higher ROA indicates better asset utilisation and an increase in the bottom line.

"The bank will exit the current fiscal year with an ROA of 1%, and on an annual basis, the ROA will exceed 1% in the next fiscal year," he told PTI.

For the December quarter, the bank reported a net profit of Rs 952 crore, registering a growth of 55% on an annual basis and 45% on a quarter-on-quarter basis.

The reported annualised ROA for the quarter further improved to 0.9% against 0.6% in the previous quarter as well as the corresponding quarter last year. The annualised reported ROA for nine months has improved to 0.8% against 0.5% for 9 months of the last financial year.

Market valuation of top 6 valued firms climbs Rs 63,000 crore

NEW DELHI, PTI: The combined market valuation of six of the top-10 valued firms climbed Rs 63,478.46 crore last week, led by Larsen & Toubro and SBI, which emerged as the biggest winners. The 30-share BSE Sensex rose 187.95 points, or 0.22%, over the past week.

Larsen & Toubro, State Bank of India (SBI), HDFC Bank, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), Bajaj Finance, and Reliance Industries were the gainers, while Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, and Tata Consultancy Services saw their valuations erode.

The market valuation of Larsen & Toubro jumped by Rs 28,523.31 crore to Rs 6,02,552.24 crore. SBI added Rs 16,015.12 crore to Rs 11,22,581.56 crore.

The valuation of HDFC Bank climbed by Rs 9,617.56 crore to Rs 14,03,239.48 crore, and that of LIC edged higher by Rs 5,977.12 crore to Rs 5,52,203.92 crore. The market capitalisation (Mcap) of Bajaj Finance advanced Rs 3,142.36 crore to Rs 6,40,387 crore, and that of Reliance Industries went up Rs 202.99 crore to Rs 19,21,678.78 crore.

However, the mcap of Bharti Airtel tumbled Rs 15,338.66 crore to Rs 11,27,705.37 crore. The valuation of ICICI Bank eroded by Rs 14,632.10 crore to Rs 9,97,346.67 crore.

Infosys' Mcap declined by Rs 6,791.58 crore to Rs 5,48,496.14 crore and that of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) dipped Rs 1,989.95 crore to Rs 9,72,053.48 crore.

Reliance remained the most-valued firm, followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, SBI, ICICI Bank, TCS, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, Life Insurance Corporation of India, and Infosys.

BREAKTHROUGH PRODUCT

The surprise hit that made Anthropic into an AI juggernaut

BLOOMBERG

Even Anthropic Chief Executive Officer Dario Amodei was surprised by the initial level of enthusiasm for what became the startup's next breakthrough product. For months, engineers across the company flocked to an internal AI coding tool called Claude Code that was originally developed as a side project by Boris Cherny, then an employee in an experimental division of Anthropic that he compares to Bell Labs.

"I remember Dario asking, like, 'Hey, are you forcing engineers to use this? Why is everyone using it?'" Cherny recalled in a recent interview. Actually, Cherny explained, all he had to do was give his co-workers access "and everyone voted with their feet."

It was a sign of things to come. Claude Code, released publicly a year ago this month, quickly took off with software developers around the world, cementing Anthropic as a leader in a lucrative, emerging market for so-called vibe coding products. Other applications like Microsoft Copilot and Cursor were already popular with this cohort thanks to their approachable designs, but Claude Code promised to write and debug code more autonomously. Suddenly, rivals like OpenAI had to race to catch up to Anthropic, rather than the other way around.

Claude Code hit $1 billion in annualised run-rate revenue in the first six months after its release and has since grown to $2.5 billion, the company said. Once used primarily by AI-forward startups, Claude Code has gained traction with engineering teams at Fortune 500 companies and even among hobbyists lacking technical skills who are interested in building their own apps. It's been used for everything from growing a tomato plant to helping plan the route of a NASA Mars rover. On social media, users describe themselves as "Claude-pilled," or Claude-obsessed.

If ChatGPT's release three-plus years ago showed the potential for generative AI to spit out clever chunks of text, Claude Code's launch demonstrated how AI can actually perform a portion of a person's job with limited intervention. Anthropic said some users are now letting Claude Code work autonomously on tasks for more than 45 minutes at a time before stopping it. On average, Claude Code users spend 20 hours a week working with the product.

The success of Claude Code is both a testament to AI's utility in the workplace and a reminder of how hard it can be to predict the ways AI will be used in the real world. Its rapid adoption has revived concerns about job loss, including from Amodei, as well as fears about what happens when autonomous AI tools go awry. (Anthropic says it has staffers working to understand and address both issues.)

More imminently, however, the challenge for Anthropic and its peers is proving they can find traction with AI agents for other professions as they have with coders, a group that's quicker to adopt cutting-edge technology.

"There are a few areas where these models are actually really getting to the point where they can really change how work gets done," said Kate Jensen, head of Americas at Anthropic. "Code happened to be the first one."

Following Claude Code's runaway success, Anthropic has been pushing to expand its AI offerings for health care, finance and legal services. Those efforts have helped trigger a market meltdown in recent weeks as investors worry that certain legacy software providers may be rendered obsolete by newer AI advances. On Friday, cybersecurity stocks were the latest to slip after Anthropic unveiled new features in Claude Code to help companies spot security vulnerabilities in their software.

"You're seeing a reaction in large part to just how fast the industry is moving and how quickly the technology is getting better and better," Jensen said before the security announcement. Though some of the market swing news can be "all-consuming" at times, she said it's important to remember that legacy software companies can benefit from building on top of Anthropic's technology.

For now, much of Anthropic's traction remains in the realm of coding. At Spotify, roughly two-thirds of the staff have opted in to using Claude Code, outpacing the adoption of any similar product, according to Niklas Gustavsson, the company's chief architect and vice president of engineering. Spotify has also built its own internal tool called Honk that lets staff talk to Claude Code on Slack to make changes to the music streaming app's code base.

"For many of us, including myself, it was a bit of a mental jump," said Gustavsson, who had at least four different Claude Code agents running in the background on his laptop during the interview. "I've been in this industry for 30 years now, and the code has always been very front and centre when I'm working with it. Claude Code has completely inverted that."

Gustavsson said it's hard to capture the gains from AI coding tools in any one metric but several of Spotify's internal productivity measurements have gone up since using Claude Code. Anthropic said its engineers' productivity has grown 200%, by one measure, as Claude Code use increased over the past six months. Its sales teams, data analysts and product managers are using it, too.

Cherny, who is now head of Claude Code, feels this change in his day-to-day work. He focuses less on the boring tasks like manually debugging code, and more on strategy and talking to customers to get feedback.

"We're starting to see this world where a customer complains about something and it's fixed in a matter of minutes," he said. "It doesn't take weeks anymore. This is just very exciting for me."

Hungary to block EU's latest sanctions on Russia

BUDAPEST (HUNGARY), AP: Budapest threatened to block a new package of European Union sanctions against Russia and to stall efforts to help Ukraine until Russian oil deliveries to Hungary resume.

The EU's foreign ministers are set to meet in Brussels on Monday to discuss the bloc's 20th round of sanctions against Moscow, a measure they hope will be approved in time to coincide with the fourth anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Tuesday.

In a video posted to social media Sunday, Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said he would block the sanctions package, accusing Ukraine of deliberately holding back Russian oil deliveries through the Druzhba pipeline.

"We will not consent to the adoption of the 20th package of sanctions, because we have previously made it clear that until the Ukrainians resume oil shipments to Hungary, we will not allow decisions that are important to them to be approved," Szijjártó said.

Russian oil shipments to Hungary and Slovakia have been interrupted since January 27 after what Ukrainian officials say were Russian drone attacks that damaged the Druzhba pipeline, which carries Russian crude across Ukrainian territory and into Central Europe, leading to rising tensions between Budapest and Kyiv.

Greenland PM says 'no thanks' to Trump's hospital ship

COPENHAGEN, REUTERS: Greenland's Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen said on Sunday "no thanks" to U.S. President Donald Trump's idea of sending a hospital ship to Greenland, a territory that Trump has repeatedly said he wishes to take over.

Trump said on Saturday on social media he was working with Louisiana Governor and special envoy to Greenland, Jeff Landry, to send a hospital boat to Greenland. "President Trump's idea of sending an American hospital ship here to Greenland has been noted. But we have a public healthcare system where treatment is free for citizens. It is a deliberate choice," Nielsen said in a post on Facebook. Nielsen said Greenland remained open to dialogue and cooperation, also with the U.S.

"But talk to us instead of just making more or less random outbursts on social media," he said. Greenland, Denmark and the U.S. late last month launched diplomatic talks to resolve the crisis between the parties, following months of tension within the Nato defence alliance over Trump's threats against the Arctic territory.

Trump's post on the ship came hours after Denmark's Joint Arctic Command said it had evacuated a crew member who required urgent medical treatment from a US submarine in Greenlandic waters, seven nautical miles outside of Nuuk. It was unclear if the post had any connection to the evacuation.

India to be part of 'hexagon' of alliances: Israeli PM

Bid to create an axis of countries to counter 'radical' adversaries

JERUSALEM, PTI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu. PTI FILE

Describing India as a "global power" and its Prime Minister Narendra Modi a "personal" friend, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday talked about his vision of a "hexagon" of alliances in and around the region that will include India.

"This week, expression will be given to the special relationship that has been forged over recent years between Israel and the global power that is India, and between myself and its leader, Prime Minister Modi", Netanyahu said at the beginning of the weekly cabinet meeting.

"We are personal friends; we speak frequently on the phone and visit one another. I have visited India, and Modi has visited here," the Israeli Prime Minister said.

"We waded together in the waters of the Mediterranean, and much water has flowed since then in the Mediterranean, the Ganges, and the Jordan, though less in the Jordan", he added in reference to pictures of the two leaders walking barefoot in the sea in 2017 that went viral with talk of "bromance".

Modi will be visiting Israel on a two-day trip from February 25 to 26, his second since the "historic" visit of July 2017, which was the first by any Indian PM to the Jewish state.

Netanyahu visited India a few months later in 2018.

"In any case, one thing has happened: The fabric of this relationship has grown tighter, and he is coming here so we can tighten it further through a series of decisions related to strengthening cooperation between our governments and countries", the Israeli leader emphasised.

"This includes economic, diplomatic and security cooperation", he said.

Touching upon his diplomatic vision, Netanyahu said, "We will create an entire system, essentially a 'hexagon' of alliances around or within the Middle East".

"This includes India, Arab nations, African nations, Mediterranean nations (Greece and Cyprus), and nations in Asia that I won't detail at the moment. I will present this in an organised manner", he stressed.

The description broadly matches the vision of IMEC, India- Middle East- Europe Economic Corridor, which aims to bolster economic development by fostering connectivity.

ALLIANCE VISION

- Israeli PM describes India as a 'global power' and its Prime Minister Modi a "personal" friend.
- Modi will be visiting Israel on a two-day trip from February 25 to 26, his second since July, 2017.
- New alliance to include India, Arab nations, African nations, Mediterranean nations (Greece and Cyprus), and nations in Asia, Netanyahu confirmed.

NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister

"Thank you, my friend, Prime Minister Netanyahu. I fully agree with you on the bond between India and Israel as well as the diverse nature of our bilateral relations. India deeply values the enduring friendship with Israel, built on trust, innovation and a shared commitment to peace and progress. Looking forward to our discussions during my upcoming Israel visit.

Macron asks Trump to lift sanctions on European officials

PARIS, AFP: French President Emmanuel Macron recently wrote to his US counterpart Donald Trump asking him to lift sanctions placed on several European figures, including former European commissioner Thierry Breton and ICC judge Nicolas Guillou, according to extracts of a letter seen by AFP.

In the letter, Macron says he is making a personal appeal to Trump to reconsider the sanctions, which he argues were unjustly imposed.

The letter's existence was first reported in La Tribune Dimanche.

Breton has been banned from entering the United States since December 2025 because of his work on regulating digital platforms in the European Union, which the Trump administration views as an infringement on freedom of expression. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has denounced EU rules as "blatant acts of extraterritorial censorship."

In the letter, Macron says the sanctions impinge on the EU's right to regulate activities within its borders and that EU regulations in no way extend to US territory.

Judge Guillou, meanwhile, was sanctioned by Washington in August 2025, along with other International Criminal Court judges.

EU 'expects' US to honour trade deal as US prez hikes tariffs

BRUSSELS, AFP: The European Commission called Sunday for Washington to abide by the terms of the trade deal struck last year with the EU, as President Donald Trump announced new global tariff hikes a day after an adverse Supreme Court ruling.

"A deal is a deal. As the United States' largest trading partner, the EU expects the US to honour its commitments set out in the Joint Statement -- just as the EU stands by its commitments," said a commission statement. "The European Commission requests full clarity on the steps the United States intends to take following the recent Supreme Court ruling on the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA)," it said.

Trump temporarily raised the global duty on imports into the United States to 15 percent on Saturday, delivering a fresh jolt of uncertainty just a day after the Supreme Court ruled much of his international tariffs campaign illegal.

The EU and United States last year struck an agreement setting US tariffs at a maximum 15 percent on most European goods.

"EU products must continue to benefit from the most competitive treatment, with no increases in tariffs beyond the clear and all-inclusive ceiling previously agreed," the commission said.

It warned that "when applied unpredictably, tariffs are inherently disruptive, undermining confidence and stability across global markets and creating further uncertainty across international supply chains".

The EU executive said it remained "in close and continuous contact" with Trump's administration.

US Secret Service kills man trying to access Trump's Florida estate

In his early 20s, the man was carrying gas can and shotgun

WASHINGTON, AP

An armed man drove into the secure perimeter of Mar-a-Lago, President Donald Trump's resort in Palm Beach, Florida, as another vehicle was exiting before being shot and killed early Sunday morning, according to a spokesman for the US Secret Service.

The man, who was in his early 20s and from North Carolina, had a gas can and a shotgun, according to Anthony Guglielmi, the spokesman. He had been reported missing by his family a few days ago, and investigators believe he headed south and picked up the shotgun along the way.

Guglielmi said a box for the weapon was discovered in the man's vehicle after the incident, which took place around 1:30 am.

Trump has faced threats to his life before, including two assassination attempts during the 2024 campaign. Although the president often spends weekends at his resort, he and first lady Melania Trump were at the White House when the breach at Mar-a-Lago occurred.

After entering near the north gate of the property, the man was confronted by two Secret Service agents and a Palm Beach County sheriff's deputy, according to Palm Beach County Sheriff Ric Bradshaw.

"He was ordered to drop those two pieces of equipment that he had with them. At which time he put down the gas can, raised the shotgun to a shooting position," Bradshaw said at a brief press conference. The two agents and the deputy "fired their weapons to neutralise the threat."

The FBI asked residents who live near Mar-a-Lago to check any security cameras they may have for footage that could help investigators.

The man who was killed has not been publicly identified. Investigators are working to compile a psychological profile and a motive is still under investigation. Asked whether the individual was known to law enforcement, Bradshaw said "not right now."

The incident comes as the United States has been rocked by spasms political violence.

Pak attacks Afghanistan; Kabul warns of apt response

ISLAMABAD, PTI

Pakistan on Sunday said it targeted at least seven terrorist hideouts in Afghanistan in retaliation for the recent rebel attacks in the country, with Kabul warning of a "necessary and measured response" to the strikes.

In the latest terrorist incident, an army lieutenant colonel and a soldier were killed in a suicide attack in the Bannu area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Saturday.

According to a statement by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Pakistan has conclusive evidence that these acts of terrorism, including at a Shiite mosque in Islamabad, one each in Bajaur and Bannu, followed by another incident in Bannu on Saturday, were allegedly perpetrated by Khwarij on the behest of their Afghanistan-based leadership and handlers.

"Responsibilities for these attacks were also claimed by Afghanistan-based Pakistani Taliban belonging to Fitna-al-Khwarij (FAK) and their affiliates, and Islamic State of Khorsan Province (ISKP)," the ministry said.

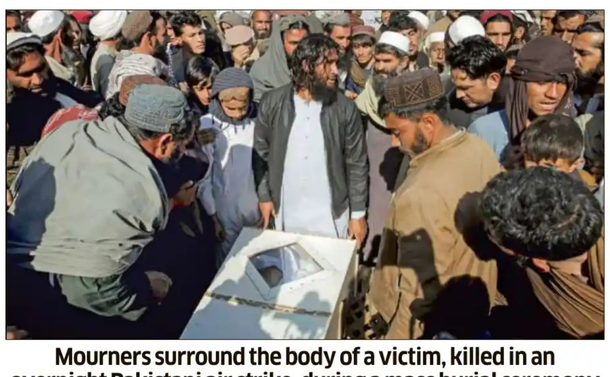
Fitna-al-Khawarij is a term that the state uses for the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

It said that despite repeated efforts by Pakistan to urge the Afghan Taliban regime to take verifiable measures to prevent the use of Afghan territory by terrorist groups and foreign proxies to carry out terrorist activities in Pakistan, it "failed" to undertake any substantive action against them.

"In this backdrop, Pakistan in a retributive response, has carried out intelligence-based selective targeting of seven terrorist camps and hideouts belonging to Pakistani Taliban of FAK and its affiliates and ISKP at the border region of Pakistan Afghan border with precision and accuracy," it said.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan in a statement warned that the Pakistani strikes on the provinces of Paktika and Nangarhar will be met with a "necessary and measured response".

"Our borders and the security of our people is our sacred religious and national duty," Afghanistan's Defence Ministry said, adding that "at the appropriate time, a necessary and measured response will be delivered to these aggressions".



Mourners surround the body of a victim, killed in an overnight Pakistani air strike, during a mass burial ceremony at the Girdi Kas village in Bihsud district, on Sunday. AFP

Ready for nuke concessions if US meets demands: Iran

DUBAI, REUTERS

Iran has indicated it is prepared to make concessions on its nuclear programme in talks with the U.S. in return for the lifting of sanctions and recognition of its right to enrich uranium, as it seeks to avert a U.S. attack.

Both sides remain sharply divided -- even over the scope and sequencing of relief from crippling U.S. sanctions -- following two rounds of talks, a senior Iranian official told Reuters.

However, Reuters is reporting for the first time that Iran is offering fresh concessions since their talks ended last week, when the sides appeared far apart and heading closer to military conflict. Analysts say the move suggests Tehran is trying to keep diplomacy alive and stave off a major U.S. strike.

The official said Tehran would seriously consider a combination of sending half of its most highly enriched uranium abroad, diluting the rest and taking part in creating a regional enrichment consortium - an idea periodically raised in years of Iran-linked diplomacy.

Iran would do this in return for U.S. recognition of Iran's right to "peaceful nuclear enrichment" under a deal that would also include lifting economic sanctions, the official said.

In addition, Iran has offered openings for U.S. companies to participate as contractors in Iran's large oil and gas industries, the official said, in negotiations to resolve decades of dispute over Tehran's nuclear activities.

"Within the economic package under negotiation, the United States has also been offered opportunities for serious investment and tangible economic interests in Iran's oil industry," the official said.

The White House did not respond immediately to queries on the issue.

Iranian students protest for second day

Iranian students gathered for a second day of competing pro- and anti-government rallies on Sunday commemorating people killed in recent protests that sent shockwaves through the country, reports AFP. Students had also rallied on Saturday at the start of the new university semester to mark the 40th day since the deaths at the peak of the protests on January 8 and 9, in line with Shiite mourning tradition, according to videos shared by local and diaspora media.

Russian missile barrage hits energy, railways across Ukraine

KYIV, AFP: Russia fired scores of missiles and drones at targets across Ukraine on Sunday, crashing into energy and rail infrastructure and residential buildings, just two days before the fourth anniversary of Moscow's all-out invasion.

The capital Kyiv, regularly targeted by Russian missile and drone attacks since the start of the full-scale invasion, has faced waves of overnight strikes in recent weeks as Moscow has intensified assaults amid freezing winter temperatures.

"Moscow continues to invest in strikes more than in diplomacy," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said of the attack on social media, adding that Russia launched about 50 missiles and 300 drones overnight.

"The main target of the attack was the energy sector. Ordinary residential buildings were also damaged, and there is damage to the railway."

The intense barrage came the same day Hungary said it would block the EU's latest package of sanctions against Russia, unless Ukraine reopens a key oil pipeline that supplies the country.

Ukraine says the Druzhba pipeline that crosses its territory to deliver Russian oil to Slovakia and Hungary was damaged late January by Russian strikes.

WORLD AT A GLANCE

Princess of Wales Catherine arrives to attend the 2026 British Academy of Film and Television Awards (BAFTA) at the Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, London, on Sunday. REUTERS

Curfew extended in Nepal's Gaur to prevent further clashes

A curfew imposed in Gaur municipality in Nepal's Madhesh province following clashes between two communities was extended indefinitely on Sunday, reports PTI from Kathmandu.

The District Administration Office, in a notice, said the prohibitory order will remain effective from 8:30 am on Sunday till the next notice, within the eastern Mudbalwa Gate, western Lalbakaiya Dam, north of Bam Canal and south of Gaur Customs Office.

The clashes between the two communities were triggered by a dispute on Thursday evening, followed by an escalation of tension through Friday and Saturday morning, with at least eight people injured.

The original curfew order was issued from 1 am on Saturday to 6:30 am Sunday after a clash erupted between two communities in Savgadha village of Gaur-6 in Rautahat district on Saturday morning.

However, the prohibitory order was relaxed from 6:30 am to 8:30 am for the convenience of locals.

Representatives of all political parties in Rautahat issued a public appeal to maintain communal harmony and mutual respect.

Cuban forces exit Venezuela

Cuban security advisers and doctors have been leaving Venezuela as Interim President Delcy Rodriguez's government faces intense pressure from Washington to unwind Latin America's most consequential leftist alliance, according to 11 sources familiar with the matter, reports Reuters from Caracas.

Venezuela's Interim President Delcy Rodriguez has entrusted her protection to Venezuelan bodyguards, according to four of the sources, unlike deposed president Nicolas Maduro and his predecessor, the late president Hugo Chavez, who both relied on elite Cuban forces. Thirty-two Cubans were killed in the US military attack that captured Maduro on January 3, according to the Cuban government. These soldiers and bodyguards were part of a deep security agreement between Caracas and Havana that began in the late 2000s in which Cuban intelligence agents embedded throughout the military and Venezuela's formidable DGCIM counterintelligence unit, which was fundamental to weeding out domestic opposition.

President of Ensemble Pour la Republique parliamentary group Gabriel Attal (C) accompanied by Ensemble Pour la Republique's MP Jean-Luc Fugit (R) pets a sheep as he visits the International Agricultural Show at Paris Expo Porte de Versailles in Paris on Sunday. AFP

IS to confront Syria's new govt

The Islamic State group on Saturday urged its fighters to confront Syria's new authorities, in its spokesperson's first audio message in two years, reports AFP from Beirut.

In a recording posted online, Abu Huzaifa al-Ansari said IS members in Syria must fight "the new Syrian regime, with its secular government and national army" and "make that their priority".

The last time al-Ansari posted an audio message was in January 2024, when he urged IS supporters to kill Jews around the world in revenge for Israeli attacks in Gaza.

Since ousting longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad in December 2024, Syria's new authorities, who had links to the Al-Qaeda jihadist group, have sought to break from their radical past and present a moderate image.

Last year, Syria joined the US-led coalition against IS and has been coordinating attacks against the group's remnants in the country.

IS swept across Syria and Iraq in 2014 committing massacres.

Firefighters work to extinguish flames from a vehicle used by suspected organised crime members as a roadblock following a series of detentions by federal forces, in Guadalajara, Mexico, on Sunday. REUTERS

Vivek-ridden Margaretta clinches main event

MUMBAI RESULTS

Margaretta, from the stables of Pesi Shroff and ridden by G Vivek, won the Poonawalla Breeders' Multi Million, the feature event of the Mumbai races on Sunday.

1. Kumar R Dalal Gold Trophy - 1600M: Kings Gambit (Vijay Shirke) Yash Narredu 1; Break Point (Neeraj Rawal) 2; Opus Dei (Akshay Kumar) 3; Zafferano (Treror Patel) 4; Wb: Lnk, 3-1/4, 1-1/4L. T: 1-35.82. TB: Pesi Shroff. Fav: Zafferano.

2. Mystical Trophy - 2400M: Caccini (Zavaray Poonawalla) David Allan 1; Diego Garcia (Suraj Narredu) 2; Allez L Etoile (A Prakash) 3; Harrison (A Prakash) 4; Wb: 4, 2, 2L. T: 2-30.48. TB: Karthik Ganapathy. Fav: Caccini.

3. Dr Goolam E Vahanvati Trophy - 1600M: Algonquin (Geoffrey Nagpal) David Allan 1; Looking Like A Wow (Trevor Patel) 2; Giant Gold (Aditya Waydande) 3; Lickety Split (Nazil) 4; Not Run: Gold Bar. Wb: Nk, 1-1/2, Shd. 1-36.69. TB: Dallas Todytwalla. Fav: Marius.

4. Intervalve Poonawalla Ltd Trophy - 1200M: Minari (Mukul Sonawala) Neeraj Rawal 1; Pinnacle (Yash Narredu) 2; Organised Chaos (Trevor Patel) 3; Bravion (G Vivek) 4; Wb: Lnk, 4-1/2L, Hd. T: 1-09.90. TB: Imtiaz Sait. Fav: Pinnacle. .

5. Poonawalla Breeders' Multi Million - 1400M: Margaretta (Mehermosh Deboo) G.Vivek 1; Lady Scarlet (Trevor Patel) 2; Buckingham (Antony Raj) 3; Invictor (David Allan) 4; Wb: 1-1/4, 1, 1/2L. T: 1-21.16. TB: Pesi Shroff. Fav: Buckingham.

6. Florrie And Freddy Sopher Gold Trophy - 1200M: Vegatha (Cheriyan Abraham) Ajinkya 1; Storm Cloud (Bharat Singh) 2; Manor House (S G Prasad) 3; Neptune (Neeraj Rawal) 4; Wb: 3-3/4:, Nk, 1-1/2L. T: 1-09.57. TB: Pradeep Chouhan. Fav: Challenge Accepted.

7. Corfe Castle Trophy - 1200M: Social Butterfly (Mukul Sonawala) Neeraj Rawal 1; Fontana (P Dhebe) 2; Market King (G Vivek) 3; Irish Gold (Akshay Kumar) 4; Wb: 3-3/4, Snk, 1-3/4L.. T: 1-09.53. TB: Dallas Todywalla. Fav: Social Butterfly.

8. Hong Kong Jockey Club Trophy - 1400M: Machiavellian (Jiyaji Bhosale) Antony Raj 1; Ma Cherie (G Vivek) 2; Mighty Hero (Aditya Waydande) 3; Ministry Of Time (Trevor Patel) 4; Wb: Shd:, 1L, Shd.. T: 1-23.57. TB: Adhhirajsingh Jodha. Fav: Ministry Of Time.

Bengaluru dividends:
I race: Rs 17w; 10, 22p; Fc: Rs 64; Q: Rs 45; Shp: Rs 26; Thp: Rs 27; Tri: Rs 250 & 110; Ex: Rs 282 & 62.
II race: Rs 19w; 11, 13, 12p; Fc: Rs 50; Q: Rs 28; Shp: Rs 32; Thp: Rs 33; Tri: Rs 245 & 148; Ex: Rs 635 & 224.
III race: Rs 56w; 22, 27p; Fc: Rs 278; Q: Rs 197; Shp: Rs 71; Thp: Rs 75; Tri: Rs 2,008 & 1,865; Ex: Rs 44,542.
IV race: Rs 135w; 21, 11, 12p; Fc: Rs 351; Q: Rs 82; Shp: Rs 31; Thp: Rs; 39; Tri: Rs 371 & 177; Ex: Rs 1,223 & 645.
V race: Rs 89w; 21, 18, 12p; Fc: Rs 1,437; Q: Rs 250; Shp: Rs 41; Thp: Rs 51; Tri: Rs 927 & 372; Ex: Rs 3,960 & 2,546. .
VI race: Rs 49w; 17, 37, 27p; Fc: Rs 1,422; Q: Rs 934; Shp: Rs 99; Thp: Rs 61; Tri: Rs 5,874 & 1,762; Ex: Rs 50,810 & 10,888.
VII race: Rs 14w; 13, 28p; Fc: Rs 84; Q: Rs 59; Shp: Rs 48; Thp: Rs 36; Tri: Rs 234 & 78; Ex: Rs 499 & 170.
VIII race: Rs 39w; 18, 17, 16p; Fc: Rs 238; Q: Rs 234; Shp: Rs 49; Thp: Rs 36; Tri: Rs 1,265 & 707; Ex: Rs 1,571 & 716.
Jackpot: Rs 35,041 (32). **Runner-up**: Rs 4,711 (102). **I treble**: Rs 3,084 (39). **II treble**: Rs 1,411 (56).

Emperor Ashoka for plum event

DELHI SELECTIONS

Emperor Ashoka, from the stables of Rajinder and to be ridden by Akash Rajput, is fancied to win the Indian Air Force Cup, the feature event of the races on Monday.

First race starts at 2.30 pm.

1. Silver Fortress Plate - 1100M: Royal Baby 1, Miss Boost 2, Ustaad Ji 3.
2. Adler Star Plate - 1200M: Trending Cruise 1, Sidney Sussex 2, Missey Boy 3.
3. Rapid Action Plate (Div-I) - 1200M: Ashwa Kohima 1, Big Decision 2, Tomorrows Dreams 3.
4. Rapid Action Plate (Div-II) - 1200M: Robust 1, Eyes On The Prize 2, Beejay 3.
5. Indian Air Force Cup - 1100M: Emperor Ashoka 1, Big Daddy 2, Ashwa Frankie 3.
6. Entertainment Plate - 1000M: Super Speed 1, Kaftan 2, Alex 3.
Day's best: Robust. **Jackpot**: 2, 3, 4,5 & 6. **Treble**: 4, 5 & 6.

Karkera, Nirmaben win

NEW DELHI, PTI: Kartik Karkera dominated the capital's streets to win the 11th New Delhi Marathon and, along with two others, breached the qualifying standard for this year's Asian Games here on Sunday.

Completing the 42.2 kilometres in a remarkable timing of two hours and thirteen minutes (02:13:10), Mumbai's Karkera comfortably surpassed the qualifying mark for the Asian Games in Japan later this year.

A doctor by profession, the 28-year-old had to stave off a concerted bid by Gopi Thonakal (02:13:12) and Man Singh (02:13:15).

◆ ON TV ◆

CRICKET

T20 WC: Zimbabwe vs West Indies (7:00 pm). **LIVE** on **Star Sports Network, JioHotstar.**

FOOTBALL

ISL: Mohun Bagan vs Chennaiyin FC (7:30 pm). **LIVE** on **Sony Sports Ten 2, FanCode.**

TENNIS BENGALURU W100

Vaishnavi falters in final

Belgium's Hanne trounces Indian wildcard to wear the crown

HITA PRAKASH
BENGALURU, DHNS

Belgium's Hanne Vandewinkel (right) and India's Vaishnavi Adkar pose with the winners and runner-up trophies, respectively, at the SM Krishna Tennis Stadium in Bengaluru on Sunday.
DH PHOTO/ KRISHNAKUMAR PS

Heading into Sunday's final at the SM Krishna Tennis Stadium, the key question was whether Vaishnavi Adkar could reproduce the strong performances she had delivered in the previous rounds. Awaiting her in the final of the KPB Trust ITF Women's Open W100 was Belgium's Hanne Vandewinkel, who knew the threat the home player carried into the match.

Vaishnavi had hunted down eighth-seeded Mai Hontama of Japan (world No. 220), fourth-seeded Taylah Preston of Australia (WR 148) and second-seeded Lanlana Tararudee of Thailand (WR 126) to make it this far. Riding on those results, the chunk of spectators anticipated another giant kill from the the wildcard entrant. But what ensued was a locked-in Hanne who straightaway summoned her A game to down the Indian for a 6-0, 6-1 win.

The lopsided battle, which lasted a mere 56 minutes, crowned the 124th-ranked Belgian as champion while the 690th-ranked Vaishnavi, bruised and battered, went back with the runners-up trophy.

"I had never played in the same tournament as she did," started off Hanne following her dominating victory.

"So I was watching a bit of her game while warming up (on previous days). Though a bit unknown, I knew she beat some really good players. I was very aware of that and I didn't want to make the mistake of not being fully present today and letting her come into the match because I knew she could play some really good tennis. So I was just there from the beginning and made her work for every point and that worked well for me."

A second year student of medicine at the University of Leuven back home, the 21-year-old Hanne's cut-throat approach in dismantling Vaishnavi's game was evident from the word go.

If Hanne's serves were high-octane, her groundstrokes were defined by precision. Neutralising Vaishnavi's biggest weapon -- her backhand -- with sliced returns, the European remained consistent by injecting pace and power, giving little elbow room for the home hope. Hanne's variety of shots and agile legs rattled Vaishnavi as she failed to hold on to a single serve in the opening set before surrendering it 6-0 in 20 minutes. Egged on by Rohan Bopanna, in whose academy the Pune girl began training two months ago, Vaishnavi showed sparks of her previous self in the third game of the second set which she held for the first time in the match to open the account at 1-2. In the very next game (fourth), the first Indian female to reach an ITF W100 final, won three points in a row to give herself three breakpoints. That, however, proved to be the only bright phase as Hanne shut the light out by serving, slicing, sliding in five points in a row to hold and lead 3-1. It wasn't long before she swallowed the remaining three games to win her second title on the trot after clinching the ITF W75 in Pune last Sunday.

Result: Final (prefix denotes seeding): 3-Hanne Vandewinkel (Bel) bt Vaishnavi Adkar 6-0, 6-1.

Bengaluru settle for draw against intense NEUFC

Gurpreet comes to hosts' rescue in an entertaining game

ADITYA K HALDER
BENGALURU, DHNS

Bengaluru FC had to be content with just a point as they played an entertaining 1-1 draw against a dominant NorthEast United FC in their second Indian Super League match at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium.

Braian Sanchez's 18th-minute ground shot from 20-odd yards for the hosts was nullified by a venomous volley by NEUFC substitute Lalrinzuala Hauhnar in the 67th minute as both sides left the field at the full time with the feeling that three points were there for taking.

NEUFC, however, looked more eager for their first win of the season, especially after going down 0-3 in their season opener to East Bengal in Kolkata last week. Two shots to the woodwork and plenty of diving saves from BFC's ever-reliant shot-stopper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu made that abundantly evident to a boisterous 13,623 fans present at the venue.

BFC, on the other hand, were handed a body blow before kick-off as their most-experienced centre-back Rahul Bheke sat out the game due to a knock on his knee and was replaced by young debutant Takhellambam Bungson Singh, revealing the thin defensive squad strength of the Blues.

That reflected from the first minute of the match as NEUFC hit the ground running. The Juan Pedro Benali-coached visiting side bombarded BFC's defensive third with one attack after another. Both of NEUFC's expected threats MS Jithin and Parthib Gogoi came too close to comfort for BFC. Especially when forward Gogoi's shot forced a save out of the Gurpreet in the second minute.

The best chance, however, fell to NEUFC's centre-back Michel Zabaco whose threatening header from the six-yard box following a corner beat Gurpreet but not the left post.

NEUFC went on to win three more corners and an opportunity from open play in the first 15 minutes but the hosts luckily weathered the early storm to take the lead against the run of play.

The goal came off a solo effort by Argentine midfielder Braian who used his silky feet to closer to the ball before unleashing a low shot from the outside the box into the left-bottom corner.

The goal brought much-needed calm in BFC's approach, who started taking control of the tempo of the game while the NEUFC's intensity subsidised. They, however, still looked dangerous, especially in set-piece situations, including long throws into the box.

The best of it fell to Zabaco again as the Spanish defender lunged into a beautifully placed indirect freekick but only to rattle the crossbar.

That let off was only indication of things to come in the second half as NEUFC returned with sharper intensity, similar to their first-half burst.

Despite resistance from a mostly airborne Gurpreet, who made one diving save after another, the Highlanders equalised through impact substitute Lalrinzuala Hauhnar, who volleyed the ball into the net following a pin-point long ball by centre-back Asheer Akhtar from the back.

Bengaluru FC's Braian Sanchez (left) scores against Northeast United FC during their ISL clash at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru on Sunday.
DH PHOTO/ PUSHKAR V

India A crowned champs

BANGKOK, PTI

India A were crowned champions of the ACC Women's Asia Cup Rising Stars' tournament following their 46-run win over Bangladesh A in Bangkok on Sunday. X

Tejal Hasanbis made an impactful 51 not out off 34 balls on a slow turner before leg-spinner Prema Rawat made the ball talk as India A outplayed Bangladesh A by a whopping 46 runs in a low-scoring final to defend the ACC Women's Asia Cup Rising Stars here on Sunday.

At 44 for four, India were in trouble but Hasanbis, who has played ODIs for India, and captain Radha Yadav, another international, (36 off 30) shared an 89-run stand for the fifth wicket to lift their team to 134 for seven in 20 overs.

Considering conditions and strength of Indian bowling attack, the Radha-led side comfortably defended by bowling out Bangladesh for 88 in 19.1 overs.

The star with the ball was Prema (3/12 in four overs), who was part of RCB's triumphant campaign in the recently played WPL.

She gave the ball plenty of flight and got enough purchase off the surface.

Bangladesh were never in the run chase having lost their first wicket for 12 runs in the third over.

The procession started when Ishma Tanjim was caught off pacer Saima Thakor after unsuccessfully charging down the pitch.

Prema got her wicket with a classical leg-break that bounced a tad extra to take the outside edge of Shamima Sultana.

Even in the inaugural final of the tournament in 2023, India A had got the better of Bangladesh A.

Batting first, India A felt the pressure on a trick surface but Hasanbis showed plenty of skill and character to bail her team out of trouble. She batted at a strike rate of 150.00, much higher than the rest of the batters in the game to make a decisive difference.

While the top four hardly contributed for India A, Hasanbis was able to clear the ropes twice with Radha providing much needed support at the end.

Brief scores: India A: 134/7 in 20 overs (Tejal Hasabnis 51, Radha Yadav 36; Fahima Khatun 4-25) bt Bangladesh A: 88 all out in 19.1 overs (Sonia Mendhiya 2-21, Tanuja Kanwer 2-11, Prema Rawat 3-12).
Result: India A won by 46 runs.
PoM: Tejal Hasbanis.

Dhoni available but may not play all CSK matches

AHMEDABAD, PTI: The perennial question around MS Dhoni's future resurfaced once again as the Indian Premier League caravan readies for the 2026 season - will the iconic former skipper feature in all matches for Chennai Super Kings this year?

Dhoni, who will turn 45 later this year, will be available for CSK for the upcoming IPL season, a top franchise source confirmed.

However, with CSK's prize transfer Sanju Samson now in the ranks, it is unlikely that the legendary former India captain would play all the league games.

"We can confirm this much that he is coming to Chennai and had confirmed his availability for the season," a top CSK source said on the condition of anonymity. In any case, with the Impact Player rule in place, Dhoni the batter has not been required extensively over the past two editions. His role has largely been situational, often limited to late-order cameos.

Imperious Alcaraz reigns supreme; Pegula wins

DOHA, AFP: Carlos Alcaraz **(in pic)** was at his devastating best on Saturday as he claimed the Qatar Open title with a ruthless 6-2, 6-1 win over Arthur Fils.

The seven-time Grand Slam champion needed just over 50 minutes to see off his French opponent and claim the 26th title of his career.

Following Australian Open success earlier this month -- completing his career Grand Slam at just 22 years of age -- Alcaraz backed it up by storming to the title in Doha in his first tournament back since Melbourne and extending his match-winning streak to 12.

"I came this year hungry for more," said Alcaraz.

"I think after every tournament, we just have to set new goals. I'm just really happy and proud of everything I have done with my team on and off the court.

"It's been a really strong start to the year. It wasn't easy... I had to be strong mentally with my team. I'm just playing great tennis and I'm really happy about this week."

For 40th-ranked Fils, returning gradually to action after a lengthy injury absence, the Spanish world No. 1 was a step too far at the end of a fine week in which he recorded wins over top-10 seeds Jakub Mensik and Jiri Lehecka.

The run to his first tour-level final since Tokyo in 2024 will propel the former world No. 14 up to 33 in the next ATP rankings.

"It's been eight long months with my injury," said Fils.

"So in a time like this, you just have to think about the last eight months when I was struggling, not playing tennis. Today was not the day but I think we did a hell of a job."

Pegula takes title

Jessica Pegula gave herself an early birthday present by clinching her fourth WTA 1000 crown with a 6-2, 6-4 victory over Elina Svitolina in the Dubai final on Saturday.

The American denied Svitolina a chance to win a third title in the northern emirate, and improved her record against the Ukrainian to 6-3.

Karnataka bowlers made to toil hard

BENGALURU, DHNS: After a disappointing display with the bat on the opening day, Karnataka bowlers were made to toil hard on the second day of their Col CK Nayudu Trophy quarterfinal against hosts Mumbai on Sunday.

Mumbai, who resumed at their overnight score of 12 for none, propelled themselves into a position of strength, leading the visitors by 70 runs after reaching 310/1 in 97 overs at stumps on Day 2.

Openers Ayush Jethwa (138 n.o., 316b, 18x4, 1x6) and Angkrish Raghuvanshi (92, 177b, 11x4, 1x6) shared a 200-run first-wicket stand. After the first wicket, No.3 bat Manan Bhatt (64 n.o., 92b, 8x4, 1x6) added to the visitors' woes with an unbeaten fifty.

Brief scores: Karnataka: 240 all out in 78.5 overs (Dhruv Prabhakar 107, Harshil Dharmani 27; Suryansh Shedge 2-35, Zaid Patankar 2-50, Himanshu Singh 2-57, Atharva Bhosale 3-60) vs Mumbai (O/n: 12/0): 310/1 in 97 overs (Angkrish Raghuvanshi 92, Ayush Jethwa 138 n.o., Manan Bhatt 64 n.o.).

Barcelona back on top of La Liga after big win over Levante

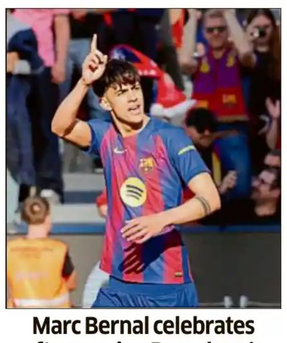
BARCELONA, AFP: Barcelona cruised to a 3-0 victory over Levante to reclaim pole position in La Liga on Sunday.

After Real Madrid fell to a 2-1 defeat at Osasuna on Saturday, Hansi Flick's side moved a point clear of their bitter rivals with a comfortable victory at Camp Nou against the team in 19th.

Marc Bernal and Frenkie de Jong gave Barca a commanding first-half lead and Fermin Lopez wrapped up the win with a sensational drive late on.

Barcelona were glad to get back to winning ways after a 4-0 thrashing by Atletico Madrid in the Copa del Rey semifinal first leg last week and then a 2-1 defeat by Girona on Monday in La Liga.

"I'm very happy with the three points and to help the team with a goal," Bernal told Movistar. "It's true they had a chance in the first minute, with my goal we were able to stay calm and build confidence."



Marc Bernal celebrates after scoring Barcelona's first goal against Levante at Camp Nou. AP/PTI

It was Bernal's second goal since returning from a long-term knee injury, which kept the 18-year-old out of action for over a year.

"I thought of my father (in my celebration) and my physio -- he told me I would score and he has helped me a lot in this process," added Bernal.

Earlier Sevilla earned a 1-0 win at Getafe, while third-placed Villarreal host Valencia later on.

Liverpool late ambush singes Forest

NOTTINGHAM, AFP

Alexis Mac Allister's 97th-minute goal rescued Liverpool from a lacklustre performance to beat struggling Nottingham Forest 1-0 on Sunday in a huge boost to their chances of Champions League football next season.

Forest's fourth manager of the season, Vitor Pereira, was taking charge for the first time in the league and his side looked set to earn a deserved point until a dramatic finale.

Mac Allister had a goal ruled out when he charged down Ola Aina's clearance in the closing stages.

The ball was deemed to have struck the Argentine midfielder on the arm.

However, to Pereira's fury, Forest did not heed the warning as they slipped to within two points of the Premier League relegation zone.

Mac Allister swept home a rebound after Virgil van Dijk's header was saved.

After another lengthy VAR review, this time the call went in Liverpool's favour despite Hugo Ekitike standing in an offside position.

Liverpool's Alexis Mac Allister (centre) sets off for celebration after scoring their winning goal against Nottingham Forest in Nottingham on Sunday. AFP

Liverpool remain in sixth but climb level on points with Chelsea and Manchester United and within six points of Aston Villa.

Fulham climbed above Sunderland into the top half of the table after becoming just the second visiting side to win at the Stadium of Light this season.

Raul Jimenez's double secured a 3-1 victory for Marco Silva's men.

Crystal Palace eased the rising discontent at Selhurst Park with just a second win in 16 games.

Evann Guessand's first Palace goal in the 90th minute beat 10-man Wolves 1-0.

City close gap

On Saturday, Manchester City stepped up their title charge as Nico O'Reilly's double sealed a vital 2-1 win against Newcastle on Saturday.

O'Reilly put City ahead in the first half at the Etihad Stadium and restored their lead after Lewis Hall had equalised.

Pep Guardiola's side weren't at their best but they held on for a victory that moved them within two points of leaders Arsenal.

Guardiola had claimed on Friday that he "couldn't care less" about Arsenal's recent stumble breathing new life into the title race.

But while Arsenal have spluttered with two wins from their last seven league games, City are heating up at just the right time.

A fifth successive win in all competitions extended their unbeaten run to eight games.

IN BRIEF

Avyukth wins U-16 chess

Avyukth M and Akshay Mugulur won the U-16 and U-10 titles respectively at the Champions Chess Academy competitition at Rajarajeshwarinagar in Bengaluru on Sunday, reports DHNS.

Avyukth clinched the U-16 category after winning 5.5 points out of six while Akshay won all six points to emerge champion in the U-10 category.

Coorg Hawks A emerge winners

Coorg Hawks A edged Paleya Taluk 7-5 to be crowned champions in the 7th edition of the CCCA Chairos Bheemaiah Hockey 5's tournament on Sunday, reports DHNS.

Result: Final: Coorg Hawks A: 7 bt Paleya Taluk: 5. **Special Awards: Player of the Tournament:** Mohd Raheel (Coorg Hawks A); **Best Goalkeeper:** Bopanna BN (Coorg Hawks A); **Highest Scorer:** Rajant (Southern Command).

PROTEAS PRODUCE CLINICAL SHOW TO POST 76-RUN VICTORY

RUTHLESS SA expose India's chinks

SIDNEY KIRAN
AHMEDABAD, DHNS

Defending champions India, despite winning all their four group games of the ICC T20 World Cup, had hardly looked their part. On a balmy Sunday night, they were ruthlessly picked apart by a fired-up South Africa in their opening Super Eights game, which has left them with a lot of heavy lifting to do over the next week if they wish to retain the crown.

Firstly, their bowlers fluffed the lines as a sensational 97-run fourth-wicket assault off 51 balls from David Miller (63, 35b, 7x4, 3x6) and Dewald Brevis (45, 29b, 3x4, 3x6), and an excellent late momentum-shifter from the dangerous Tristan Stubbs (44 n.o., 24b, 1x4, 3x6) powered the Proteas to an imposing 187/7 at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

Then their batters bungled things even more badly against a strong South African attack that bowled wisely from the start. The in-form Ishan Kishan fell for a four-ball duck, an out-of-sorts Abhishek Sharma could only manage 15, a struggling Tilak Varma scored just one, while skipper Suryakumar Yadav departed for 18. At 51/5, the writing was on the wall, and they crashed to 111 all out in 18.5 overs to suffer a massive 76-run defeat. Marco Jansen (4/22) did the damage upfront while Keshav Maharaj (3/24) and Corbin Bosch (2/12) crushed the middle and lower order.

Bowling first in this tournament, the Indians did start strongly before being savaged by Miller and Brevis that turned the tide towards South Africa. Jasprit Bumrah (3/15) castled Quinton de Kock in the second over, his pace partner Arshdeep Singh (2/28) dismissed Aiden Markram before Bumrah had South Africa reeling at 20/3 when he had Ryan Rickelton caught by Shivam Dube off the last ball of the fourth over.

David Miller (front) and Dewald Brevis plundered a match-winning 97 runs for the fourth wicket in just 51 balls to lift South Africa to 187/7 from 20/3 against India in their Super Eights match in Ahmedabad on Sunday. PTI

Smelling blood, Indian skipper introduced his spin ace Varun Chakravarthy inside the Power Play itself, but Miller and Brevis had other plans. Despite South Africa being under the cosh, the duo chose to counter-attack, and the high-risk gamble paid off handsomely. Their courage to take on Chakravarthy, known for his parsimonious bowling and wicket-taking abilities, completely rankled the finger-spinner, who ended up having a miserable day in the office by conceding a whopping 47 runs in his four overs.

Not just Chakravarthy, Miller and Brevis attacked his spin partner Washington Sundar and medium pacer Shivam Dube. Using their big broad shoulders to great effect, the duo smacked the trio with power that left Suryakumar a worried man. Both his frontline spin options and the back-up pacer were taken apart ruthlessly by Miller and Brevis, with the run-rate soaring with every passing over.

Dube provided the much-needed breakthrough when he had Brevis caught in the 13th over, bringing an end to the fiery stand. And when Miller departed in the 16th over with South Africa at 152/5, India had hopes of limiting the damage, especially with Bumrah bowling like a dream.

However, the dangerous Tristan Stubbs played a superb cameo to swing the momentum back South Africa's way. He scored 20 in the final over off Hardik Pandya which ensured India had to produce a masterful chase if they had to ace the contest.

It was not to be, as the moment part-time off-spinner Markram, opening the bowling, dismissed Kishan in the first over, the wheels started to come off India's chase. They kept losing wickets at regular intervals, with not one batter putting his hands up. South Africa, who lost the 2024 final to India but won the World Test Championship crown last year that has significantly boosted their confidence, never lifted their foot off the pedal to bulldoze a shell-shocked Indians.

SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA

Markram c Pandya b Arshdeep (7b)	4
De Kock b Bumrah (7b, 1x4)	6
Rickelton c Dube b Bumrah (7b, 1x6)	7
Brevis c Abhishek b Dube (29b, 3x4, 3x6)	45
Miller c Varma b Chakravarthy (35b, 7x4, 3x6)	63
Stubbs (not out) (24b, 1x4, 3x6)	44
Jansen c Rinku b Arshdeep (6b)	2
Bosch c&b Bumrah (6b, 1x4)	5
Rabada (not out) (1b)	0
Extras (B-1, LB-2, W-6, NB-2)	11
TOTAL (for 7 wkts, 20 overs)	**187**

Fall of wickets: 1-10 (De Kock), 2-12 (Markram), 3-20 (Rickelton), 4-117 (Brevis), 5-152 (Miller), 6-158 (Miller), 7-167 (Bosch).

Bowling: Arshdeep 4-0-28-2 (w-1), Bumrah 4-0-15-3, Chakravarthy 4-0-47-1 (w-3), Sundar 2-0-17-0, Pandya 4-0-45-0 (nb-1), Dube 2-0-32-1 (w-2, nb-1).

INDIA

Kishan c Rickelton b Markram (4b)	0
Abhishek c Bosch b Jansen (12b, 2x4, 1x6)	15
Varma c de Kock b Jansen (2b)	1
Suryakumar c Brevis b Bosch (22b, 2x4)	18
Sundar c de Kock b Bosch (11b, 1x6)	11
Dube c Ngidi b Jansen (37b, 1x4, 3x6)	42
Pandya c Stubbs b Maharaj (17b, 1x6)	18
Rinku c Stubb b Maharaj (2b)	0
Arshdeep c Stubbs b Maharaj (2b)	1
Chakravarthy (not out) (3b)	0
Bumrah c Markram b Jansen (1b)	0
Extras (LB-1, W-4)	5
TOTAL (all out, 18.5 overs)	**111**

Fall of wickets: 1-0 (Kishan), 2-5 (Varma), 3-26 (Sundar), 4-43 (Sundar), 5-51 (Suryakumar), 6-86 (Pandya), 7-86 (Rinku), 8-88 (Arshdeep), 9-111 (Dube).

Bowling: Markram 1-0-5-1, Jansen 3.5-0-22-4, Rabada 4-0-32-0, Ngidi 4-0-15-0 (w-1), Maharaj 3-0-24-3 (w-1), Bosch 3-0-12-2 (w-2).

Result: South Africa won by 76 runs.

PoM: David Miller; **India's next match**: Vs Zimbabwe (Feb 26, Chennai).

England dismantle listless Lankans

Archer, Jacks wreak havoc with ball after Salt fifty

PALLEKELE, PTI

The pace-spin duo of Jofra Archer and Will Jacks tore through Sri Lanka's top-order after Phil Salt's 40-ball 62 to set up a sensational 51-run win for England in an eventful Super Eights fixture of the T20 World Cup here on Sunday.

After left-arm spinner Dunith Wellalage (3/26) did the star turn for a disciplined Sri Lankan attack to limit a scratchy England to 146 for nine, the islanders seemed to have the match under control.

But speedster Jofra and off-spinner all-rounder Jacks turned the game on its head in the second half, leaving Sri Lanka tottering at 34 for five in the sixth over in a total domination of the powerplay. Sri Lanka were eventually bowled out for 95 in 16.4 overs.

Jacks returned fine figures of 3/22 in four measly overs while Archer ended with 2/20 in three overs, and they were well supported by Liam Dawson (2/27 in 4 overs) and Adil Rashid (2/13 in 3.4 overs) as they wrapped up the lower-order and tail.

In the end, Salt's knock too proved to be vital to the final outcome of the match, even as his other colleagues in the batting unit failed miserably.

For Sri Lanka, skipper Dasun Shanaka was the top scorer with 30 off 24 balls.

If England's start was bad, Sri Lanka's beginning was worse as Jofra got rid of the dangerous Pathum Nissanka (9 off 8 balls) cheaply, caught by Jamie Overton who was asked to stand at deep mid-wicket just before that ball and the opener fell into the trap to a fast and full delivery.

Reprising the role played by Wellalage in the first half, Jacks then got into the act by removing Kusal Mendis and Pavan Rathnayake in successive balls.

Archer had Kamil Mishara caught by Overton at gully and Jacks sent Wellalage after he played across the line to get caught by skipper Harry Brook at mid-on.

Brief scores: England: 146/9 in 20 overs (Phil Salt 62; Dilshan Madushanka 2-25, Dunith Wellalage 3-26, Maheesh Theekshana 2-21) bt Sri Lanka: 95 all out in 16.4 overs (Dasun Shanaka 30; Jofra Archer 2-20, Will Jacks 3-22, Liam Dawson 2-27, Adil Rashid 2-13). **Result:** England won by 51 runs. **PoM:** Will Jacks.

England's Will Jacks (right) celebrates with team-mates after taking a wicket against Sri Lanka during the Super Eights match of the T20 World Cup in Pallekele. AFP

West Indies wary of Zimbabwe threat

MUMBAI, PTI

A remarkably assured West Indies will be wary of Zimbabwe's steely resolve when the two unbeaten teams face off in a vital T20 World Cup Super Eights clash here on Monday.

Both the West Indies and Zimbabwe topped their respective groups in the first round but the job is far from finished for them as sterner challenges lie ahead.

For the two-time champions the West Indies, it will be another test of their self assured approach in a format they truly thrive in and bring a flair which perhaps no other team does.

Daren Sammy's troops have rallied well to the call of creating their own "little piece of history" but consistency and rising up to the occasion would be paramount.

With four wins on the trot, the West Indies have ensured their series defeats in as many as seven bilateral affairs in the lead-up to the T20 World Cup is a matter of past.

The Caribbean side has once again emerged a force to reckon with, especially with commanding win over peers England and with dominating performances in which it brushed aside lower-ranked teams.

Shai Hope (155 runs, two 50s) has found his form, Shimron Hetmyer (134) has added a lot of firepower at No. 3 and

West Indies' Shimron Hetmyer during a practice session ahead of their Super Eights match against Zimbabwe at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Sunday. PTI

LIVE 7 PM, STAR SPORTS

sthe two leaders in Jason Holder (seven wickets) and Roston Chase have chipped in with valuable performances along the way.

Sherfane Rutherford's (126) explosiveness is another important factor for the Caribbean camp along with all-round capabilities of Romario Shepherd (six wickets), who in particular would lean on his IPL experience here at the Wankhede Stadium to deliver the goods.

On the other hand, Zimbabwe have made the cricketing world yearn for more with their inspirational run so far, one in which they have thwarted challenges from former multi-format world champions Australia and Sri Lanka with great aplomb.

Zimbabwe have ticked the boxes of earning "respect and recognition" which they had set out for apart from making it to the Super Eight.

But in a group consisting the indomitable South Africans, the West Indies and the title-favourites India, Zimbabwe will fancy their chances of causing maximum damage and see how far they can go.

Zimbabwe's self-belief and confidence matches their all-round strength as they now find themselves in the big boys' club where stakes are much higher than this band is used to.

The young Brian Bennett has been a star with the bat with two fifties and a total of 175 runs putting him at the top of Zimbabwe's run-scoring chart.

Seeding could have fuelled Zim's charge: Sammy

MUMBAI, PTI: West Indies head coach Daren Sammy on Sunday said Zimbabwe may have drawn extra motivation from being clubbed with higher-seeded sides Sri Lanka and Australia in Group B, a factor he feels could have inspired them to punch above their weight and finish on top.

Much to the surprise of the cricketing world, Zimbabwe topped Group B ahead of Sri Lanka while former champions Australia were eliminated.

The seedings for Super Eights has featured prominently in talks since the business end of the T20 World Cup started.

Sammy said he understands it from a logistical point of view.

"If you take the logistics that comes into it, trying to give fans who probably travel, (it is) an opportunity to plan ahead," Sammy told reporters ahead of West Indies' Super Eights clash against Zimbabwe.

"... The big thing for most people is (that) they would be saying 'oh! West Indies came out of the group' (or) 'oh! Zimbabwe came out of the group' - that means somebody they see (coming out from) there did not come out.

"Zimbabwe did what they had to do. If we were not seeded or so, and I saw this person (an opponent) is going to play there, that gives me motivation, I'm sure Zimbabwe gave them motivation and inspiration to come out and play the way they played.

Aussie legends show no mercy after debacle

SYDNEY, AFP

Australia coach Andrew McDonald is adamant the players he took to the Twenty20 World Cup were good enough, but the evidence suggests otherwise with a rebuild looming before they co-host the next tournament with New Zealand in 2028.

The 2021 champions were seen as title contenders again at the showpiece in India and Sri Lanka, but the former white ball heavyweights instead suffered a calamitous exit in the group stage for the first time since 2009.

They head home to a significant pile-on from former Australian greats and an acerbic media who expected more. They have been quick to lob sharp criticism at the underperforming players and perceived selection blunders.

"We said at the start of this World Cup that we were

Glenn McGrath

concerned about Australia," pace great Glenn McGrath told reporters, pointing to the absence of fast bowlers Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc as exposing a soft underbelly.

"All of a sudden, the aura of that Australian team is no longer there when other teams play it ... unfortunately, not surprising."

The warning lights were flashing before the event even started when they capitulated heavily to Pakistan in a three-game warm-up, outplayed with bat and ball.

In those matches they lost by 22, 90 and 111 runs -- the final two Australia's largest in terms of runs in T20 internationals.

At the time, skipper Mitchell Marsh said: "Absolutely no stress from our end."

That soon became: "It's a devastated group" as their T20 campaign unravelled with defeats to Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka.

Australia's three selectors -- George Bailey, McDonald and Tony Dodemaide -- have come in for particular criticism, notably their continued faith in under-performing all-rounders Cameron Green and Cooper Connolly.

They were also blasted for their head-scratching failure to play Steve Smith and to drop in-form Matt Renshaw for the Sri Lanka clash when they were still mathematically alive.

"Look at the selections, look at (Glenn) Maxwell, Connolly, Green and (Josh) Inglis, these guys are all out of form," lamented Mark Waugh, himself a former selector.

"The selectors have their plans in place, but you've got to be smart enough to see which players are in form and which players are out of form.

"And you've got to play the percentages a lot better than what our selectors have played."

A defiant McDonald said there was "always going to be differing opinions from the outside", suggesting they "don't understand what the moving parts are and the conversations are on the inside".

"The build into this tournament and the style of cricket, the balance of our batting unit and the balance of our bowling attack, we felt really confident coming into this tournament," McDonald added.

Doha to host ICC board meetings

DUBAI, PTI

Doha will host the next round of International Cricket Council board and committee meetings from March 25 to 27, reflecting the world body's growing engagement with the sport in the middle eastern nation.

"The meetings will bring together ICC Board Directors, Chief Executives, Committee Members and senior leadership as part of the organisation's ongoing governance calendar, providing an important opportunity to deliberate over key matters pertaining to the present and future of the global game," the ICC said in a statement.

Since 2020, overall participation in cricket in Qatar has grown by an impressive 447 per cent, stated the ICC.

"Central to this growth has been cricket's inclusion in the Qatar Olympic Committee's School Olympic Programme, which has helped embed the game within schools across the country. More recently, the launch of ICC's Criiio Cricket Festivals has further expanded cricket's reach, with 287 school teams taking part in the previous edition," the world body added.

ICC Chairman Jay Shah (left) presents a memento to Google CEO Sundar Pichai during India-SA match. PTI

History-making Eileen of China wins freeski halfpipe gold medal

LIVIGNO (ITALY), AFP

Eileen Gu soared to victory in the women's freeski halfpipe final on Sunday to end her wait for a gold medal at the Milan-Cortina Olympics, becoming the most decorated freestyle skier in the history of the Winter Games.

The 22-year-old, who also won silver in slopestyle and big air in Italy, posted a best score of 94.75 at Livigno Snow Park to edge out China teammate Li Fanghui, who scored 93.00. Great Britain's Zoe Atkin took bronze.

Gu Ailing Eileen

"Every day I was fighting," said Gu. "I gave my all every single day that I've been here, and that's no joke.

"In all three events I showcased my best skiing and as far as performance goes, that's all I can ask for -- to be able to show the world the best that women's skiing has to offer at the moment that it really counts."

As in her previous competitions, Gu was forced to deal with self-inflicted pressure.

The defending champion flunked her first run, scoring just 30.00, as world champion Atkin set the pace with 90.50.

But Gu, who now has three Olympic golds and three silvers in total, produced a dazzling performance in the second round to wow the judges.

She punched the air, cheered by a sizeable group of Chinese fans, who stood behind a row of flags, and was awarded 94.00.

Gu raised her game still further in her final run, posting 94.75 to put her further out of reach and her rivals could not catch her.

She celebrated her win in front of her supporters before receiving her gold medal wearing a large golden bow in her hair.

Gu's sixth Olympic medal in freestyle skiing takes her clear of a tie with Canada's Mikael Kingsbury and China's Xu Mengtao.

India fall short in penalty shootout against Aussies

HOBART, PTI: The Indian men's hockey team dished out a much improved show but still went down to formidable Australia in the penalty shootout in their FIH Pro League match here on Sunday.

The two sides were tied at 2-2 after full time with Amit Rohidas (in pic) (15th) and Jugraj Singh (43rd) putting India in front before a brace from Joel Rintala (47th, 56th) helped Australia get back on level terms.

Amit Rohidas

In the shootout, though, Australia emerged 5-4 victorious.

This was after India lost five matches in a row in the FIH Pro League this year, including four in the home leg in Rourkela.

They lost to Spain 0-2 in their first match of the Hobart leg on Saturday.

Australia had the lion's share of possession in the opening exchanges, pushing India back in their own half. India stayed solid at the back and grew into the game to pile some pressure back on Australia, forcing Jed Snowden into action on a couple of occasions.

India were rewarded with a penalty corner late in the first quarter, and made the most of it as Rohidas scored from his drag-flick to give them a 1-0 lead.

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